

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER 2, 1868.

ANNE HEREFORD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXIII.

GETTING INTO THE WEST WING.

SITTING by the fire in the pretty bedroom, with the candles on the table, and the chintz curtains drawn before the window, shutting out the pine-walk and any unearthly sight that might be in it, I thought and resolved. To remain at Chandos with its ostensible master in his present mood was excessively undesirable, almost an impossibility; and I began to think I might quit it without waiting for an answer from Miss Barlieu. The chief difficulty would be the getting away; the actual departure; for Mr. Chandos was certain to oppose it. Another difficulty was money.

It struck me that the only feasible plan would be to see Lady Chandos. I would tell her that I *must* go, not mentioning why; ask her to sanction it, and to lend me enough money to take me to Nulle. I did not see that I could leave without seeing her; certainly not without making her acquainted with the proposed fact, and thanking her for her hospitality and kindness. Heroines of romance, read of in fiction, might take abrupt flight from dwellings by night, or else; but I was nothing of the sort; only a rational girl of sober, every-day life, and must act accordingly.

"Do you happen to know how Lady Chandos is to-night, Harriet?" I asked, when the maid came in to inquire whether I wanted anything more.

"Her ladyship's a trifle better, miss. I have just heard Hill say so."

Harriet left the room; and I sat thinking as before. That my seeing Lady Chandos could only be accomplished by stratagem I knew, for Hill was a very dragon, guarding that west wing. If it was really

Lady Chandos who had been pacing the grounds—and Mrs. Penn was positive in her assertion and belief—she must undoubtedly be well enough to speak to me. It was but a few words I had to say to her; a few minutes' time that I should detain her. "Circumstances have called me away, but I could not leave without personally acquainting you, madam, and thanking you for your hospitality and kindness." Something to that effect: and then I would borrow the money—about forty or fifty francs; which Miss Barlieu would give me to remit, as soon as I got to Nulle. With Lady Chandos's sanction to my departure, Mr. Chandos could not put forth any plea to detain me.

Never were plans better laid than mine—as I thought. Rehearsing them over and over again in my mind after I lay down in bed, the usual sleeplessness followed. I tossed and turned from side to side; I began to repeat verses; all in vain. Sleep had gone away from me, and I heard the clock strike two.

I heard something else; a stir in the gallery. It seemed as if some one burst out at the doors of the west wing, and came swiftly to the chamber of Mr. Chandos. In the stillness of night sounds are plainly distinct that would be inaudible in the day. The footsteps were like Hill's, as if she had only stockings on. There was a brief whispering in Mr. Chandos's chamber, and the same footsteps ran back to the west wing.

What could be the matter? Was Lady Chandos worse? Almost as I asked myself the question, I heard Mr. Chandos come out of his room, go down stairs, and out at the hall-door. Curiosity led me to look from the window. The stars were shining brilliantly; I suppose it was a frost; and the tops of the dark pine-trees rose clear and defined against the sky. All was quiet.

A very few minutes and other sounds broke the silence; those of a horse's footsteps. Mr. Chandos—as I supposed it to be—came riding forth at a canter from the direction of the stables; the pace increasing to a gallop as he turned into the broad walk.

There seemed less sleep for me than ever. In about an hour's time I heard Mr. Chandos ride in again. I heard him ride round to the stables, and come back thence on foot. He let himself in at the hall-door, came softly upstairs, and went into the west wing. It was in that wing that something must be amiss.

I was three-parts dressed in the morning when Mrs. Penn knocked at the door and entered. I did wish she would not thus interrupt me! Once she had come when I was reading my chapter; once during my prayers.

"Did you hear any disturbance in the night?" she began. "Mr. Chandos went out at two o'clock. Do you know what for?"

"Mrs. Penn! How should I be likely to know?"

"I happened to be up, looking from the end window——"

"At that time of night?" I interrupted.

"Yes, at that time of night," she repeated. "I was watching for—for—the ghost if you will" (but I thought somehow she said the ghost to mystify me) "and so I may as well confess it. I often do watch from my window at night. Quite on a sudden a figure appeared making its way swiftly towards the stables; my heart stood still for a moment; I thought the ghost had come at last. I did, Anne Hereford; and you need not gaze at me with your searching eyes, as if you questioned my veracity. But soon I recognized Mr. Chandos, and presently saw him come back on horseback. Where did he go? For what purpose?"

"You put the questions as though you thought I could answer them," I said to her; and so she did, speaking in a demanding sort of way. "I cannot tell where Mr. Chandos has gone."

"He is back now: he was home again in about an hour. I would give the whole world to know!"

"But why? What business is it of yours or mine? Mr. Chandos's movements are nothing to us."

"They are so much to us—to me—that I would forfeit this to be able to follow him about and see where he goes and what he does," she said, holding up her right hand.

I looked at her in wonder.

"I would. Is it not a singular sort of thing that a gentleman should rise from his bed at two o'clock in the morning, saddle his horse by stealth, and ride forth on a mysterious journey?"

"It is singular. But he may not have saddled his horse by stealth."

"How now?" she tartly answered. "He did saddle it; saddled it himself."

"Yes: but that may have been only from a wish not to disturb the grooms from their rest. To do a thing one's self with a view of sparing others, and to do it stealthily are two things."

"So your spirit must rise up to defend him still! Take care of yourself, Anne Hereford!"

"Nay, there was no *defence*. What does it signify whether Mr. Chandos saddles a horse for himself or gets a man to saddle it?"

"Not much, perhaps: looking at it in the light you do."

"Mrs. Penn, I wish you would please to go, and let me finish dressing. I am afraid of being late."

Rather to my surprise, she moved to the door without another word, and shut it behind her.

I went down to breakfast: I could not help myself. It would not do to plead illness or the sulks, and ask to have my meals sent upstairs. But we had a third at table, I found; and that was Dr. Laken. I am not sure how I and Mr. Chandos should have got on without him; with him all went smoothly.

But not merrily. For both he and Mr. Chandos spoke and looked

as if under the influence of some great care. Listening to their conversation, I discovered a rather singular circumstance. Mr. Chandos's errand in the night had been to the telegraph office at Warsall, to send an imperative message for Dr. Laken. That gentleman (almost as though a prevision had been upon him that he would be wanted) had started for Chandos the previous evening by a night train, and was at Chandos at seven in the morning. So that he and the message crossed each other. His visit was of course—though I was not told it—to Lady Chandos; and I feared there must be some dangerous change in her. They talked together, without reference to me.

"I wish you could have remained," Mr. Chandos suddenly said to the doctor.

"I wish I could. I have told you why I am obliged to go, and where. I'll be back to-night, if I can; if not, early to-morrow. Remember one thing, Mr. Harry—that my staying here could be of no possible benefit. It is a satisfaction to you, of course, that I should be at hand, but I can do nothing."

"Mr. Dexter is here, sir, and wishes to see you," said Hickens, entering the parlour at this juncture. "He says he is sorry to disturb you so early, sir, but he is off to that sale of stock, and must speak to you first. I have shown him into your private room, sir."

Mr. Chandos rose from his seat and went out. And now came my turn. I was alone with Dr. Laken and seized on the opportunity to inquire about Lady Chandos. See her I must, and would.

"Is Lady Chandos alarmingly ill, Dr. Laken?"

He was eating an egg at the time, and he did not speak immediately: his attention seemed almost equally divided between regarding me and finishing the egg.

"What you young ladies might call alarmingly ill, we old doctors might not," were his words, when he at length spoke.

"Can she speak?"

"Oh yes."

"And is sufficiently well to understand, if any one speaks to her?"

"Quite so. Don't trouble yourself, my dear, about Lady Chandos. I trust she will be all right with time."

Not another word did I get from him. He began talking of the weather; and then took up a newspaper until Mr. Chandos came back. As I was leaving them alone after breakfast, Mr. Chandos spoke to me in a half grave, half jesting tone.

"You are one of the family, you know, Miss Hereford, and may be asked to keep its affairs close, just as Emily would be, were she here. Don't mention that I went to Warsall in the night—as you have now heard I did go. It is of no use to make the household uneasy."

And, as if to enforce the words, Dr. Laken gave three or four emphatic nods. I bowed and withdrew.

To see Lady Chandos? How was it to be done? And, in spite of Dr. Laken's reassuring answer, I scarcely knew what to believe. Hill went about with a solemn face, silent as the grave; and an impression pervaded the household that something was very much amiss in the west wing. *My* impression was, that there was a great deal of unaccountable mystery somewhere.

"Harriet," I said, as the girl came to my room in the course of her duties, "how *is* Lady Chandos?"

"Well, miss, we can't quite make out," was the answer. "Hill is in dreadful trouble, and the doctor is here again; but Lizzy Dene saw my lady for a minute this morning, and she looked much as usual."

So far well. To Lady Chandos I determined to penetrate ere the day should close. And I am sure, had anybody seen me that morning, dodging into the gallery from my room and back again, they would have deemed me haunted by a restless spirit. I was watching for my opportunity. It did not come for nearly all day. In the morning Dr. Laken and Mr. Chandos were in the west wing; in the afternoon, Hill was shut up in it. It was getting dusk when I, still on the watch, saw Hill come forth. She left the door ajar, as if she intended to return instantly, and whisked into a large linen-closet close by. Now was my time. I glided past the closet, quiet as a mouse, and inside the green baize door of the west wing.

But which was the room of Lady Chandos? No time was to be lost, for if Hill returned, she was sure to eject me summarily, as she had done once before. I softly opened two doors, taking no notice of what the rooms might contain, looking only whether Lady Chandos was inside. Next I came to one and opened it as I had the others; and saw—what? Who—who was it sitting there? Not Lady Chandos.

In a large arm-chair at the fire, propped up with pillows, sat an emaciated object, white, thin, cadaverous. A tall man, evidently bearing in features a great resemblance to Mr. Chandos, a strange likeness to that ghostly vision—if it had been one—I had once seen in the gallery. Was he the ghost?—sitting there and staring at me with his large eyes, but never speaking? If not a ghost, it must be a living skeleton.

My pulses stood still; my heart leaped into my mouth. The figure raised his arm, and pointed peremptorily to the door with his long, lanky, white fingers. A sign that I must quit his presence.

I was glad to do so. Startled, terrified, bewildered, I thought no more of Lady Chandos, but went back through the passage, and out at the green baize door. There, face to face, I encountered Mr. Chandos.

I shall not readily forget *his* face when he looked at me. Never had greater hauteur, rarely greater anger, appeared in the countenance of any living man.

"Have you been in *there*?" he demanded.

"Yes. I——" More I could not say. The words stuck in my throat.

"Listen, Miss Hereford," he said, his lips working with emotion. "I am grieved to be compelled to say anything discourteous to a lady, more especially to you, but I must *forbid* you to approach these rooms, however powerfully your curiosity may urge you to visit them. I act as the master of Chandos, and demand it as a right. Your business lies at the other end of the gallery; this end is sacred, and must be kept so from intrusion."

I stole away with my crimsoned face, with a crimsoned brain, I think, wishing the gallery floor would open and admit me. Hill came out with wondering eyes; Mr. Chandos went on, and shut the door of the west wing after him. I felt ashamed to sickness. My "curiosity!"

But who could it be, he whom I had just seen, thus closeted in the apartments of Lady Chandos? Could it be Sir Thomas, arrived from abroad? But when did he arrive? and why was this concealment in his mother's rooms?—for concealment it appeared to be. Whoever it was, he was fearfully ill and wasted: of that there could be no doubt; ill, as it seemed to me, almost unto death; and a conviction came over me that Dr. Laken's visits were paid to him, not to Lady Chandos.

"My dear child, how flushed and strange you look!"

The speaker was Mrs. Penn, interrupting my chain of thought. She was standing at the door of the east wing, came forward, and turned with me into my room.

"Anne," she continued, her tone full of kind, gentle compassion, "was Mr. Chandos speaking in that manner to *you*?"

"I deserved it," I sighed, "for I had no right to enter the west wing clandestinely. I went there in search of Lady Chandos. I want to leave, but I cannot go without first seeing her, and I thought I would try to do so, in spite of Hill."

"And did you see her?" questioned Mrs. Penn.

"No; I could not see her anywhere; I suppose I did not go into all the rooms. But I saw some one else."

"Who was it?"

"The strangest being," I answered, too absorbed in the subject, too surprised and bewildered, to observe my usual custom of telling nothing to Mrs. Penn. "He was sitting in an easy chair, supported by pillows; a tall, emaciated man, looking—oh, so ill! His face was the thinnest and whitest I ever saw; but it had a likeness to Mr. Chandos."

Had I been more collected, I might have seen how the revelation affected Mrs. Penn. Just then my eyes and senses were, so to say, blinded. She put her hand on my arm, listening for more.

"He startled me terribly; I declare, at first sight, I did think it was a ghost. Why should he be hidden there?—if he is hidden. Unless it is Sir Thomas Chandos come home from India—Mrs. Penn! what's the matter?"

The expression of her countenance at length arrested me. Her face had turned white, her lips were working with excitement.

"For the love of Heaven, wait!" she uttered. "A tall man, bearing a family likeness to Mr. Chandos—was that what you said?"

"A striking likeness: allowing for the fact that Mr. Chandos is in health, and that the other looks as though he were dying. The eyes are not alike: his are large and dark, Mr. Chandos's blue. Why? Perhaps it is Sir Thomas Chandos."

"It is not Sir Thomas; he is a short, plain man, resembling his mother. No, no; I know too well who it is; and it explains the mystery of that west wing. All that has been so unaccountable to me since I have dwelt at Chandos is plain now. Dolt that I was never to have suspected it! Oh! but they were clever dissemblers, with their sicknesses of my Lady Chandos!"

She went out, and darted into the east wing. So astonished was I, that I stood looking after her, and saw her come quietly forth again after a minute or two, attired to go out. She was gliding down the stairs, when Mrs. Chandos likewise came from the east wing and called to her.

"Mrs. Penn, where are you going? I want you."

Mrs. Penn, thus arrested, turned round, a vexed expression on her face.

"I wish to do a very slight errand for myself, madam; I shall not be long."

"I cannot spare you now; I cannot, indeed. You must defer it until to-morrow. I will not stay by myself now it is getting dusk. I am as nervous as I can be this evening. You are not half so attentive as Mrs. Freeman was; you are always away, or wanting to be."

Mrs. Penn came slowly up the stairs again, untying her bonnet-strings. But I saw she had a great mind to rebel, and depart on her errand in defiance of her mistress.

What could it be that she was so anxious for? what was she going to do? As she had passed to the stairs before being called back, the words "Down now with the Chandoses!" had reached my ears from her lips, softly spoken. I felt sick and frightened. What mischief might I not have caused by my incautious revelation? Oh! it seemed as though I had been treacherous to Chandos.

Restless and uncomfortable, I was going into the oak-parlour a little later, when Lizzy Dene, in a smart new bonnet and plaid shawl, a small basket on her arm, came into the hall to say something to Hickens, who was there.

"I suppose I may go out at this door, now I'm here?" said she, afterwards; and Hickens grunted out "Yes" as he withdrew. At that self-same moment Mrs. Penn came softly and swiftly down the stairs, and called to her. Neither of them saw me, just inside the parlour.

"You are going out, I see, Lizzy. Will you do a little errand for me?"

"If it won't take long," was the girl's free answer. "But I have got leave to go out to tea, and am an hour later than I thought to be."

"It will not take you a minute out of your way. You know where Mr. Edwin Barley lives—the new tenant. Go to his house with this note, and desire that it may be given to him: should he not be at home, say that it must be handed to him the instant he comes in. If you do this promptly,—and keep it to yourself, mind!—I will give you a crown-piece!"

"I'll do it, and say 'thank ye,' too, ma'am," laughed Lizzy, in glee.

She opened the lid of her basket, popped in the note, and went out at the hall-door. Mrs. Penn disappeared upstairs.

But Lizzy Dene had halted in the portico, and had her face turned towards the skies.

"Now, is it going to rain?—or is it only the dusk of the evening?" she deliberated aloud. "Better take an umbrella. I should not like my new shawl to be spoiled; and they didn't warrant the blue in it, if it got a soaking."

She put down the basket, and ran back to the kitchen. Now was my opportunity. I stole to the basket, lifted the lid, and took out the letter, trusting to good luck, and to Lizzy's not looking into the basket on her return.

She did not. She came back with the umbrella, snatched up the basket by its two handles, and went down the broad walk, at a run.

With the letter grasped in my hand, I was hastening to my own room to read it in peace——

"Read it!" interposes the reader, aghast at the dishonour. "Read it?"

Yes; read it. I believed that the letter was full of treachery to Chandos, and that I had unwittingly contributed to raise it, through my incautious revelation. Surely it was my duty now to do what I could to avert it, even though it involved the opening of Mrs. Penn's letter. A sudden light of suspicion seemed to have opened upon her—whispering a doubt that *she* was treacherous.

But in the hall I met the dinner coming in, and Mr. Chandos with it. Putting the note into my pocket, I sat down to table.

It was a silent dinner, save for the most ordinary courtesies; Mr. Chandos was grave, preoccupied, and sorrowful; I was as grave and preoccupied as he. When the servants left, he drew a dish of walnuts towards him, peeled some, and passed them to me; then he began to peel for himself. It was upon my tongue to say No; not to accept them from him: but somehow words failed.

"Anne, I have not understood you these last few days."

The address took me by surprise, for there had been a long silence.

He did not raise his eyes to mine as he spoke, but kept them on the walnuts.

"Have you not, sir?"

"What could have induced you to intrude into the west wing, to-day? Pardon the word, if it grates upon your ear; that part of Chandos House is *private*; private and sacred; known to be so by all inmates; and for any one to enter unsolicited is an intrusion."

"I am sorry that I went in—very sorry; no one can repent of it now more than I do; but I had an urgent motive for wishing to see Lady Chandos. I wish to see her still, if possible. I do not like to quit Chandos without it."

"You are not going to quit Chandos?"

"I leave to-morrow, if it be practicable. If not, the next day."

"No," he said; "it must not be. I act for my mother, and refuse her sanction."

Too vexed to answer, too vexed to remain at table, I rose and went to the fire, standing with my back to him.

"What has changed you?" he abruptly asked.

"Changed me?"

"For some days now you have been unlike yourself. Why visit upon me the sins of another? I suffer sufficiently as it is; I suffer always."

I could not understand the speech any more than if it had been Greek, and glanced to him for explanation.

"I look back on my past conduct, and cannot see that I am to blame. We were thrown together by circumstances; and if love stole unconsciously over us, it was neither my fault nor yours. I was wrong, you will say, to avow this love; I believe I was; it might have been better that I had held my tongue. But——"

"It would be better that you should hold it now, sir. I do not wish to enter upon any explanation. Quit your house I will. Lady Chandos, were she made acquainted with what has passed, would be the first to send me from it."

Mr. Chandos rose and stood up by me. "Am I to understand that you wish to quit it because I have spoken of this love?"

"Yes; and because—because it is no longer a fit residence for me."

"Do you wish to imply that, under no circumstances—that is, with any barrier that may exist now against my marrying removed—would you accept my love?"

The hot tears came into my eyes. Scarcely could I keep them from raining down.

"I wish to imply—to say—that not under any alteration of circumstances that the world can bring about would I accept your love, Mr. Chandos. The very fact of your naming it to me is an insult."

Ah, me ! and how passionately was I loving him in my heart all the time, even as I spoke it.

"Very well. In that case it may be better that you quit Chandos. Should Miss Barlieu's answer prove favourable—I mean, if she assures you that danger from the fever is past—you shall be conveyed thither under proper escort."

"Thank you," I answered, feeling, I do believe, not half as grateful as I ought.

"A moment yet. In case the danger is not past, you must remain here a little longer. There is no help for it. I will promise not to speak another unwelcome word to you, and to give you as little of my company as possible. We will both ignore the past as a pleasant dream, just as effectually gone as though it had not existed. Will this content you ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I give you my honour that after this evening it shall be so. But we must have a few words together first. I have already intimated that I should not have spoken so soon but for perceiving that love had arisen on your side as well as mine. Now don't fly off at a tangent : I intend to have an explanation from you this night : an explanation that shall set things straight between us, or sever us for ever. We are not boy and girl that we should shrink from it. At least, if you are but a girl in years, you have sense and prudence and right feeling that belong rather to double your age."

Standing there before me, calm and resolute, I knew there could be no avoidance of the explanation he sought. His was the master-spirit. But it was cruel to wish me to put it into words. And so entirely needless !

"If I allude to your love for me, it is not needlessly to pain, or, as you may think, insult you : believe me, when I say it ; but only to call to your notice the inconsistency of your conduct. It is *this* that I require an explanation of. Child, you *know* you loved me,"—and his hand slightly trembled as he laid it on my shoulder. "Whence, then, the sudden change ?"

"I did not know your position then," I answered, meeting the words as I supposed he wished to force me to meet them, and taking a step backwards on the hearth-rug.

"I cannot but think you must in some way be mistaking my position. Circumstances, very sad and grievous circumstances, are rendering it of brighter prospect. I am aware of the misfortune that attaches to my family, the disgrace that is reflected upon me : but you should not treat me as though the disgrace or the fault were mine. Surely there is no justice in resenting it on me ! You might have rejected me with civility."

"I do not know what you are saying," I interrupted, passionately

angry. "What is it to me, the disgrace attaching to your family? That could not sway *me*. It is unknown to me."

"Unknown to you?" he repeated, in accents of surprise.

"Entirely unknown, save for vague rumours that I have not wished to attend to. The disgrace lies with you, sir, not with your family."

"With me? What have I done? Do you mean in having spoken to you of love?" he added, finding I did not answer: "At least, I do not see that *disgrace* can be charged on me for that. I intended to lay the case openly before you, and it would have been at your option to accept or reject me."

"Do you call deceit and dishonour no disgrace, Mr. Chandos?"

"Great disgrace. But I have not been guilty of either."

"You have been guilty of both."

"When? and how?"

"To me. You know it. You know it, sir. Had my father been alive; had I any friend in the world to protect me, I do not think you would have dared to speak to me of love."

"Were your father, Colonel Hereford, alive, Anne, I should lay the whole case before him, and say—'Judge for yourself: shall or shall not your daughter be mine?' I fancy he would find the objection less insuperable than you appear to do."

I believe I simply stared in answer to this. Calm, good, and noble he looked, standing there with his truthful eyes, speaking his apparently truthful words. It seemed that we must be at cross-purposes.

"When you spoke of the bar that existed to your marrying, you put it upon the hinted-at misfortunes, the disgrace attaching to your family, Mr. Chandos. But you never alluded to the real bar."

"There is no other bar. But for that, I would like to make you my wife to-morrow. What have you got in your head?"

I knew what I was beginning to have in my temper. "If you continue to detain me here, sir, and to say these things, I will go straight with my complaint to Mrs. Chandos."

"To Mrs. Chandos! What good would that do?" he coolly questioned.

"Oh, sir, spare me! I did not think you would behave so. Don't you see, putting me and my feelings out of the question, how all this wrongs *her*?"

He looked at me strangely, his countenance a puzzle. "What has Mrs. Chandos to do with it? She is nothing to you or to me."

"She is your wife, sir."

His elbow displaced some ornament on the mantel-piece; he had to turn and save it from falling. Then he faced me again.

"My wife, did you say?"

And very much ashamed I had felt to say it: with my hot face and my eyes bent on the carpet.

"Mrs. Chandos is no wife of mine. I never was married yet. Did you go to sleep and dream it?"

Ah, how that poor foolish heart of mine stood still! Was it possible that Mrs. Penn had been mistaken?—that my misery had been without foundation; my supposed offered insults only fancied ones? No condemned criminal, called forth from his cell to hear the reprieve read that will restore to him the life he has forfeited, could experience a more intense revulsion of joy than I did then.

I put my hands up in front of him: it was no moment for affectation or reticence.

"Tell me the truth," I gasped, "the truth as before heaven? Is, or is not, Mrs. Chandos your wife?"

He bent his head a little forward, speaking clearly and distinctly, with an emphasis on every word.

"Mrs. Chandos is my sister-in-law. She is my brother's wife. It is the truth, in the presence of heaven."

I covered my face with my hands to hide the blinding tears that fell on my cheeks of shame. To have made so dreadful a mistake!—and to have spoken of it!

Mr. Chandos took the hands away, holding them and me before him.

"Having said so much, Anne, you must say more. Has this been the cause of your changed conduct? Whence could the strange notion have arisen?"

I spoke a few words as well as I could; just the heads of what I had heard, and from whom.

"Mrs. Penn! Why she of all people must know better. She knows who Mrs. Chandos's husband is. Surely she cannot be mistaking me for my brother!"

"I thought, sir, you had no brother, except Sir Thomas."

"Yes, I have another brother," he answered, in a whisper. "You saw him to-day, Anne."

"That poor sick gentleman, who looks so near the grave?"

"Even so. It is he who is the husband of Mrs. Chandos. The fact of his being at Chandos is unknown, not to be spoken of," he said, sinking his voice still lower, and glancing round the walls of the room, as though he feared they might contain eaves-droppers. "Take care that it does not escape your lips."

Alas! it had escaped them. I bent my head and my troubled face, wondering whether I ought to confess it to him. But he spoke again.

"And so—this is the silly dream you have been losing yourself in! Anne! could you not have trusted me better?"

"You must please forgive me," I said, looking piteously at him through my tears.

Forgive me! He suddenly put out his arms and gathered me to his breast.

"Will you recall your vow, child; never—under any circumstances that the world can bring forth—to accept my love?" he whispered. "Oh, Anne, my darling! it would be cruel of you to part us."

Never more would I doubt him, never more. True, kind, good, his face was bent, waiting for the answer. My whole heart, my trust went out to him, then and for ever. I lifted my eyes with all their love, and stole my hand into his. Down came his kisses upon my lips by way of sealing the compact.

"And so you are willing to trust me without the explanation?"

How willing, none save myself could tell.

"Quite willing," I whispered; "I am certain you have not been guilty of any crime."

"Never; so help me heaven," he fervently answered. "But disgrace reflects upon me for all that, and you must give your final decision when you have heard it."

Oh, but he knew; the smile on his face betrayed it; that I should never go back from him again.

I sat down in my chair: he put his elbow on the mantel-piece as before.

"Anne, you will not run away from Chandos now."

"Not to-morrow, sir."

"Am I to be 'sir' always, you shy child? But about this fable of yours connecting me with Mrs. Chandos? It could scarcely have been Mrs. Penn who imparted it to you?"

"Indeed it was. She said a great deal more than that."

"It is not possible she can be mistaking me for my brother," he repeated, in deliberation with himself. "That cannot be, for she believes him to be a fugitive. This is very strange, Anne."

Perhaps Mrs. Penn is false? I thought in my inmost heart. Perhaps she has a motive in wishing me to quit Chandos? She had certainly done her best to forward it—and to prejudice me against him.

"Do you *know* Mrs. Penn to be true to your interests, Mr. Chandos—I mean to those of the family?"

"I know nothing about her. Of course but for being supposed to be true and honourable she would not have been admitted here. My mother—Hark! What's that?"

A sound of wheels was heard, as of a carriage being driven to the door. Mr. Chandos turned to listen. It struck me that a sort of dread rose to his countenance.

"What troubles you?" I whispered, approaching him. "You look as if there were cause for fear."

He touched me to be quiet, listening while he answered.

"There is ever cause for fear in this unhappy house. Do you remember the night that the police rode up, Anne? I thought surely the blow had come. I know not whom this carriage may have brought: I am not expecting anybody."

We heard the door opened by one of the servants. Mr. Chandos took his hand off me and sat down again.

"It may be Dr. Laken, sir."

"No; he could not be back yet."

In another moment the doubt was solved. Hickens threw open the door to announce Madame de Mellissie.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GEORGE HENEAGE.

THEY left me alone, and I sat down with my great weight of happiness. Oh, the change that had passed over me! He was not married; he was true and honourable, and he loved me! Everything else went out of my head, even the letter I held, still unopened; and when I should have thought of it I cannot say, but for the voice of Mrs. Penn in the hall, speaking in covert tones.

It came to my memory then, fast enough. Was she going to steal out, as she had previously essayed to do? I went to the door, and opened it about an inch. Lizzy Dene stood there.

"How early you are home!" Mrs. Penn was saying. "Did you deliver the letter?"

"Yes, ma'am," was Lizzy's ready answer. "A young man came to the door, and I asked if Mr. Barley was at home, and he said, 'Yes, all alone,' so I gave him the note, and he took it in."

"Thank you, Lizzy," answered Mrs. Penn, complacently. "There's the five shillings I promised you."

"Many thanks all the same to you, ma'am, but I'd rather not take it," replied Lizzy, to my great astonishment, and no doubt to Mrs. Penn's. "I'm well paid here, and I don't care to be rewarded for any little extra service. It's all in the way of the day's work."

They parted, Mrs. Penn going up the stairs again. But a startling doubt had come over me at Lizzy Dene's words: could I have taken the wrong letter from the basket? I hastened back to the light, and drew it forth. No, it was all right: it was directed to Mr. Edwin Barley. What could Lizzy Dene mean by saying she had delivered it? I wondered, as I tore it open.

"I am overwhelmed with astonishment. I was coming round to your house, in spite of your prohibition, to tell you what I have discovered, but was prevented by Mrs. Chandos. *He is here!* I am as certain of it as that I am writing these words: and it sets clear the mystery of that closely-guarded west wing, which has been as a closed book to me. Anne Hereford went surreptitiously in there just now, and saw what she describes as a tall, emaciated object, reclining in an

invalid chair, whose face bore a striking resemblance to that of Harry Chandos. There can be no doubt that it is he, not the slightest in the world; you can therefore take immediate steps, if you choose, to have him apprehended. My part is now over. "C. D. P."

The contents of the letter frightened me. What mischief had I not caused by that incautious revelation to Mrs. Penn!—Mrs. Penn, the treacherous—as she undoubtedly was. "Take immediate steps to have him apprehended." Who was he? what had he done? and how did it concern Mr. Edwin Barley? Surely I ought to acquaint Mr. Chandos, and show him the note without loss of time! He was in the west wing. Should I send Hickens to knock at the door, or go myself? Better go myself, instinct told me.

I ran lightly up the stairs. Peeping out at the east wing door, listening and prying, was the head of Mrs. Penn.

"They have quite a soirée in the west wing to-night," she said to me, as I passed; "a family gathering: all of them at it, save Sir Thomas. Whither are you off to so fast?"

"I have a message for the west wing," I answered, as I brushed on, and knocked at the door.

Hill came to unfasten it. She turned desperately savage when she saw me.

"I am not come to intrude, Hill. Mr. Chandos is here, is he not?"

"What's that to anybody?" retorted Hill.

"He is wanted, that is all. Be so good as ask him to step down to the oak parlour. At once, please; it is very pressing."

Hill banged the door in my face, and bolted it. Mrs. Penn, whose soft steps had come stealing near, seized hold of me by the gathers of my dress as I would have passed her.

"Anne, who wants Mr. Chandos? Have the police come?"

"I want him; I have a message for him," I boldly answered, the remembrance of her treachery giving me courage to say it. "Why should the police come? What do you mean?"

"As they made a night invasion of the house once before, I did not know but they might have done it again. How tart you are this evening!"

I broke from her and ran down to the parlour. Mr. Chandos was in it nearly as soon.

"Hill said I was wanted. Who is it, Anne? Do you know?"

"You must forgive me for having ventured to call you, Mr. Chandos. I have been the cause of some unhappy mischief, and how I shall make the confession to you I hardly know. But, made it must be, and there's no time to be lost."

"Sit down and don't excite yourself," he returned. "I dare say it is nothing very formidable."

"When we were speaking of the gentleman I saw before dinner in the west wing, you warned me that his being there was a secret which I must take care not to betray."

"Well?"

"I ought to have told you then—but I had not the courage—that I had already betrayed it. In the surprise of the moment, as I left the west wing after seeing him, I mentioned it to Mrs. Penn. It was done thoughtlessly; not intentionally; and I am very sorry for it."

"I am sorry also," he said, after a pause. "Mrs. Penn?" he slowly continued, as if deliberating whether she were a safe person or not. "Well, it might possibly have been imparted to a worse."

"Oh, but you have not heard all," I feverishly returned. "I do not think it could have been imparted to a worse than Mrs. Penn; but I did not know it then. I believe she has been writing to Mr. Edwin Barley."

My fingers were trembling, my face I know was flushed. Mr. Chandos laid his cold hand upon me.

"Take breath, Anne; and calmness. I shall understand it better."

I strove to do as he said and tell what I had to tell in as few words as possible. That I had said it must be Sir Thomas Chandos: that Mrs. Penn, wildly excited, said it was not Sir Thomas; and so on to the note she gave Lizzy Dene. Mr. Chandos grew a little excited himself as he read the note.

"Nothing could have been more unfortunate than this. Nothing; nothing."

"The most curious thing is, that when Lizzy Dene came back she affirmed to Mrs. Penn that she had delivered the note," I resumed. "I cannot make that out."

Mr. Chandos sat thinking, his pale face full of trouble and perplexity.

"Could Mrs. Penn have written two notes, think you, Anne?"

"I fear to think so: but it is not impossible. I only saw one in the basket; but I scarcely noticed in my hurry."

"If she did not write two, the mischief as yet is confined to the house, and I must take care that for this night at least it is not carried beyond it. After that——"

He concluded his sentence in too low a tone to be heard, and rang for Hickens. The man came immediately, and his master spoke.

"Hickens, will you lock the entrance doors of the house, back and front, and put the keys into your pocket. No one must pass out of it again to night."

Hickens stared as if stupefied. It was the most extraordinary order ever given to him at Chandos. "Why, sir?" he cried, "whatever for?"

"It is my pleasure, Hickens," replied Mr. Chandos, in his quiet tone of command. "Lock the doors and keep the keys; and suffer no

person to go out on any pretence whatsoever. No person that the house contains, you understand, myself excepted. Neither Mrs. Chandos nor Mrs. Penn; Miss Hereford"—turning to me with a half smile—"or the servants. Should any one of them present themselves at the door, and, finding it fast, ask to be let out, say you have my orders not to do it."

"Very well, sir," replied the amazed Hickens. "There's two of the maids out on an errand now, sir; are they to be let in?"

"Certainly. But take care that you fasten the door afterwards again. Go at once and do this; and then send Lizzy Dene to me."

Away went Hickens. Mr. Chandos paced the room until Lizzy Dene appeared.

"Did you want me, sir?"

"I do. Come in and shut the door. What I want from you, Lizzy, is a trifling bit of information. If, as I believe, you are faithful to the house you serve and its interests, you will give it me truthfully. Did Mrs. Penn give you a letter some two or three hours ago, to deliver at Mr. Edwin Barley's?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, spoken without hesitation or embarrassment, though with some surprise.

"Did you deliver it?"

Lizzy hesitated now, and Mr. Chandos repeated his question.

"Now only to think that one can't meet with an accident without its being known all round as soon as done!" she exclaimed. "If I had thought you had anything to do with the matter, sir, I'd have told the truth when I came back; but I was afraid Mrs. Penn would be angry with me."

"I shall be pleased to hear that the letter was not delivered," said Mr. Chandos. "So tell the truth now."

"Where I could have lost it, master, I know no more than the dead," she resumed. "I know I put it safe in my basket; and though I did run, it could not have shaken out, because the lid was shut down; but when I got to Mr. Barley's, and went to take it out, it was gone. Sleighted off right away; just like that letter you lost from the hall table, sir. What to do I didn't know, for I had given a good pull at their bell before I found out the loss. But I had got another letter in my basket——"

"Another letter?" interrupted Mr. Chandos, thinking his fears were verified.

"Leastways, as good as a letter, sir. As luck would have it, when I was running down the avenue, I met the young man from the fancy-draper's shop in the village, and he thrust a folded letter in my hands. 'For Lady Chandos, and mind you give it her,' says he, 'for it's a list of our new fashions.' So, what should I do, sir, when I found the other was gone, but give in the fashions to Mr. Barley's young man. 'And

mind you take it in to your master without no delay,' says I, 'for it's particular.' He'll wonder what they want, sending him the fashions," concluded Lizzy.

"You said nothing to Mrs. Penn of this?"

"Well—no, sir, I didn't. I meant, when she found it out, to let her think I had given in the wrong letter by mistake. I don't suppose hers was of much consequence, for it was only writ in pencil. I didn't take the money she offered me, though; I thought that wouldn't be fair, as I had not done the service."

"And my desire is, that you say nothing to her," said Mr. Chandos. "Let the matter rest as it is."

Mr. Chandos looked very grave after Lizzy Dene withdrew, as though he were debating something in his mind. Suddenly he spoke.

"Anne, cast your thoughts back a few years. Was there any one in Mr. Edwin Barley's house, at the time Philip King was killed, at all answering the description of Mrs. Penn?"

I looked at him in simple astonishment.

"It has struck me once or twice that Mrs. Penn must have been in the house, or very near it, by the knowledge she has of the details, great and small. And it would almost seem now, Anne, as though she were in league with Edwin Barley, acting as his spy."

"No one whatever was there except servants and Charlotte Delves."

"Stop a bit. Charlotte Delves—C. D. P.; C. D. would stand for that name. Is Mrs. Penn Charlotte Delves?"

The question nearly took my breath away.

"But, Mr. Chandos, look at Mrs. Penn's hair! Charlotte Delves had pretty hair—very light; quite different from this."

He smiled sadly. "You must be inexperienced in the world's fashions, my dear, if you have believed the present colour of Mrs. Penn's hair to be natural. She must have dyed her hair, intending, no doubt, to change it to golden: instead of which it has come out of the ordeal a blazing vermilion. I think Mrs. Penn *is* Charlotte Delves."

Little by little, as I compared the past Charlotte Delves with the present Mrs. Penn, the truth dawned upon me. All that was obscure, that had puzzled me in the likeness I could not trace, became clear. She had grown older; she had grown much stouter; the shape of both figure and face had changed. Mrs. Penn, with a plump face and glowing red hair, taken back, was quite another person from Miss Delves, with a thin face and long fair ringlets shading it.

"You are right," I said, in a low, earnest tone. "It is Charlotte Delves."

"And she has been here trying to find out what she can of George Heneage. I see it all."

"But, Mr. Chandos, what is George Heneage to you?"

"He is my brother, Anne. *He* is George Heneage," he added, pointing in the direction of the west wing.

He George Heneage ! I sat in greater and greater amazement. But, as I had traced the likeness in Charlotte Delves, so, now that the clue was given me, did I see that the resemblance which had so haunted me in Mr. Chandos was to the George Heneage of that unhappy time.

"You were but a child, you know, then. And a child's remembrance does not retain faces very long."

"But, Mr. Chandos, how can George Heneage be your brother?"

"Is it perplexing you? Soon after the sad time of which we know too much, my father, Sir Thomas Heneage, had a large estate—this—bequeathed to him by Mr. Chandos, my mother's brother, on condition that he assumed the name. You may be sure we lost no time in doing so,—too thankful to drop our own, which George had disgraced."

"Then—his name is no longer George Heneage, but George Chandos?" I said, unable to take the facts in quickly.

"Strictly speaking, our name is Heneage-Chandos; and Heneage-Chandos we should have been always styled. But we preferred to drop the name of Heneage completely. It may be—I don't know—that we shall take it up again hereafter."

"And where has he been all this while?"

"Ah, where ! You may well ask. Leading the life of a miserable, exiled man, conscious that Edwin Barley was ever on the watch for him, seeking to bring him to trial for the murder of Philip King."

"Did your brother really do it?" I asked, in a low tone.

"In one sense, yes. He killed Philip King, but not intentionally. So much as this he said to me for the first time only two days ago. Were he brought to trial, there could be no doubt of his condemnation and execution—and only think of the awful fear that has been ours ! You can now understand why I and my brother Thomas have felt ourselves bound in honour not to marry while that possible disgrace was hanging over us. Ill-fated George !"

"Has he been concealed here always?"

"That would have been next to impossible," replied Mr. Chandos, with a half smile at my simplicity. "He has been here a short time: and no end of stratagems have we had to resort to, to conceal the fact. My mother has been compelled to feign illness, and remain in the west wing, that an excuse might be afforded for provisions and things being carried up. I have assumed the unenviable character of a sleep-walker; we have suffered the report that my dead father, Sir Thomas, haunted the pine-walk, without contradicting it——"

"And are you not a sleep-walker?—and is there no ghost?" I breathlessly interrupted.

"The only ghost, the only sleep-walker, has been poor George," he sadly answered. "*You* saw him arrive, Anne."

"I!"

"Have you forgotten the night when you saw me—as you thought—dodging in and out of the trees, as if I wished to escape observation, and finally disappearing within the west wing? It was George. The next morning you accused me of having been there; I knew I had not, and positively denied it. Later I found that George had come: and then I amused you with a fable of my being addicted to sleep-walking. I knew not what else to invent; anything to cast off suspicion from the right quarter; and I feared you would be seeing him there again."

"But—is it not highly dangerous for him to have ventured here?"

"Aye. After the misfortune happened he lay a short while concealed at Heneage Grange, where we then lived, and eventually escaped to the Prussian dominions. We heard nothing of him for some time, though we were in the habit of remitting him funds periodically for his support. But one night he made his appearance here; it was not long after we had settled at Chandos; startling my mother and Hill nearly out of their senses. They concealed him in the west wing, and Lady Chandos feigned illness and remained in it with him, as she has done this time. He did not stay long; but henceforth we could be at no certainty, and took to leaving the lower entrance door of the west wing unfastened at night, so that he might enter at once, should he arrive a second time. Three or four times in all has he come, including this."

"But it must surely be hazardous?"

"Nothing can be more so; not to speak of the constant state of suspense and anxiety it keeps us all in. He declares he is obliged to come or die; that he is attacked with the *mal du pays*, the yearning for home, to such an extent that when the fit comes on him, he is forced to come and risk it. More dangerous, too, than his actually being here, is his walking out at night in the grounds; and he will do it in spite of remonstrance. George was always given to self-will."

"Does he walk out?"

"Does he? Why, Anne, need you ask the question? Sometimes at dusk, sometimes not until midnight, at any hour just as the whim takes him, out he will go. He has led so restless a life that walking once or twice in the twenty-four hours is essential, or he could not exist. Have you not seen the 'ghost' yourself more than once? Were you not terrified at it in the corridor? Do you forget when I gathered your face to me in the dark walk, while some one passed? I feared that you should see him—should detect that it was a living man, real flesh and blood, not a harmless ghost. Very glad were we when the servants, at his first visit, took up the theory of a ghost in place of any more dangerous notion. From them it spread outside, so that the Chandos ghost has become public rumour and public property."

"Do the servants know that you have this brother?"

"Hickens and some of the elder ones of course know it: know all he was accused of, and why he went into exile; but so many years have elapsed since, that I feel sure the remembrance of him has nearly died out. This visit has been worse for us than any, owing to the proximity of Edwin Barley."

"You think Edwin Barley has been looking out for him?"

"Think! I know it. Something must have arisen to give him the notion that George had returned to England, and was in hiding: though he could not have suspected Chandos, or he would have had it searched. Many things that we were obliged to say and do appear to have been very foolish, looking back, and they will seem still more so in after years; but they were done in dread fear. The singular thing is that Mrs. Penn—being here to find out what she could—should not have hit upon the truth before."

"Would Mr. Edwin Barley cause him to be apprehended, do you think?"

"He will apprehend him the very moment that news shall reach his ears," spoke Mr. Chandos, lifting his hands in agitation. "Living, or—dead, I had all but said—at any rate, living or dying, Edwin Barley will seize upon George Heneage. I do not say but he would be justified."

"Oh, Mr. Chandos! Can you not take him somewhere for escape?"

He sadly shook his head. "No. George is past being taken. He has grown worse with rapid quickness. Yesterday I should have said his hours were numbered: to-day he is so much better that I can only think he has entered on a renewed lease of life. At least of some days."

"What is it that is the matter with him?"

"In my opinion it is a broken heart. He has fretted himself away. Think what existence has been for him. In exile under a false name; no home, no comfort, an innocent man's death upon his conscience; and living, whether at home or abroad, in the ever-perpetual dread of being called upon to answer publicly for what has been styled murder. The doctors call it decline. He is a living shadow."

"And Mrs. Chandos is his wife! Oh, poor thing, what a life of sadness hers must be!"

"Mrs. Chandos was his wife; in one sense of the word is his wife still, for she bears his name," he gravely answered. "But I have a word to say to you, Anne, respecting Mrs. Chandos. Mrs. Penn—I shall begin to doubt whether every word and action of that woman be not false, put forth with a covert motive—informed you Mrs. Chandos was my wife, knowing perfectly well to the contrary. Mrs. Chandos was never my wife, Anne, but she was once my love."

A chill stole over my heart.

"I met with her when she was Ethel Wynne; a fair, soft-mannered girl, and I learned to love her with impassioned fervour. We became engaged, and were to be married later: I was only two-and-twenty then,

she seventeen. She came to Heneage Grange on a visit; she and her elder sister, since dead. Little thought I that my sweet, soft-mannered girl was eaten up with ambition. One morning at breakfast a letter was brought in to my father. It was from India, and contained news of the death of my brother Tom; which, I need not tell you, who know that he is alive yet, was premature. Captain Heneage had been in action, the letter stated, was desperately wounded, and taken up for dead. Tom wrote us word afterwards that it was only when they went to bury him that they discovered he was alive. But he is given to joking. Well, we mourned him as dead; and George, in his free, careless manner, told Ethel she had better have engaged herself to him than to me, for that he could make her Lady Heneage, being the heir now, which Harry never could. That George had always admired her, was certain. He had a weakness for pretty women. But for that weakness, and Mrs Edwin Barley's being pretty, Philip King might be alive now."

"Mr. Chandos paused a moment, and then went on in a lower tone, bending rather nearer to me: "Anne, will you believe that in less than two weeks' time they had gone away together?"

"Who had?"

"George Heneage and Ethel Wynne. They had gone to be married. When they returned, man and wife, my mother, Lady Heneage, would have refused to receive them, but Sir Thomas, ever lenient to us all, persuaded her. A marriage entered into as theirs had been would bring plenty of punishment in its wake, he observed. The punishment—for Ethel, at any rate—had already begun. She liked me best, far best, but ambition had temporarily blinded her. She married George on the strength of his being heir-apparent to the title, and news had now arrived that my brother Thomas was alive, and progressing steadily towards health."

"And you—what did you do?" I interrupted.

"I hid my bruised feelings, and rode the high horse of mocking indifference; letting none suppose that false Ethel had left a wound. The wound was there, and a pretty sharp one; five fathom deep, though I strove to bury it." He paused an instant, and then went on: "In six months' time she and George were tired of each other—if appearances might be trusted—and he spent a great deal of his time abroad. Ethel resented it: she said he had no right to go out taking pleasure without her; but George laughed off the complaints in his light way. They made their home at Heneage Grange, and had been married nearly a year when George went on that fatal visit to Mr. Edwin Barley's."

"Then—when that calamity took place he had a wife!" I exclaimed, in surprise: I suppose because I had never heard it at the time.

"Certainly. The shock to Ethel was dreadful. She believed him guilty. Brain fever attacked her, and she has never been quite bright in intellect since, but is worse at times than others. Hers is a disap-

pointed life. She had married George in the supposition that he was heir to the baronetcy; she found herself the wife of an exiled man, an accused murderer."

"Has she been aware of the secret visits of her husband?"

"They could not be kept entirely from her. Since the calamity, she has never been cordial with him: acquaintances they have been, but no more: it almost seems as though Ethel had forgotten that other ties once existed between them. She is most anxious to guard his secret; our only fear has been that she might inadvertently betray it. For this we would have concealed from her his presence here as long as might be, but she has always found it out and resented it loudly, reproaching me and my mother with having no confidence in her. You must remember the scene in the corridor when I locked the door of your room: Ethel had just burst into the west wing with reproaches, and they, George and my mother, were bringing her back to her own apartments. She goes there daily now, and reads the Bible to him."

How the things came out—one after the other!

"And now, Anne, I think you know all; and will understand how, with this terrible sword—George's apprehension—ever unsheathed, and waiting to strike, I could not tell you of my love."

And what if it did? Strike or not strike, it would be all the same to my simple heart, beating now with its weight of happiness. I believe Mr. Chandos could read this in my downcast face, for a smile was parting his lips.

"Is it to be yes in any case, Anne?"

"I—— Perhaps," I stammered. "And then you will tell me the truth about yourself. What is it that is really the matter with you?" I took courage to say, speaking at length of the fear that always lay upon me so heavily, and which I had been forbidden to ask about.

"The matter with me?"

"The illness that Dr. Amos said you would never get well from."

Mr. Chandos laughed. "Why, Anne, don't you see?—it was my brother George he spoke of, not me. I never had anything serious the matter with me in my life; we wiry-built fellows never have."

Was it so? Could this great dread be, like the other, a myth? In the revulsion of feeling, my wits momentarily deserted me. Pulses were bounding, cheeks were blushing, eyes were thrilling; and I looked up at him asking, was it true?—was it true?

And got my answer for my pains. Mr. Chandos snatched my face to his, and kissed it as if he could never leave off again. Hot, sweet, perfumed kisses, that seemed to be of heaven.

"But I do not quite understand yet," I said, when I could get away. "You have looked ill; especially about the time Dr. Amos came."

"And in one sense I was ill; ill with anxiety. We have lived, you

see, Anne, with a perpetual terror upon us; never free from it a moment, by night or by day. When George was not here, there was the ever constant dread of his coming, the *watching* for him, as it were; and now that he is here, the dread is awful. When George grew worse, and it became necessary that some medical man should see him, Dr. Amos was summoned to 'Mr. Harry Chandos;' and I had a bed made up in the west wing, and secluded myself for four and twenty hours."

"Did Dr. Amos think he came to you?"

"He thought so. Thought that the sickly, worn-out man he saw lying on the sofa in my mother's sitting-room was Mr. Harry Chandos; I being all the while closely shut up from sight in my temporary chamber. Laken, who has been our medical attendant for a great many years, and in our entire confidence, was unfortunately away from home, and we had to resort to a stratagem. It would not do to let the world or the household know, that George Heneage was lying concealed at Chandos."

"Then—when Dr. Laken said Lady Chandos was emaciated and obdurate, he really spoke of *him*?"

"He did: because you were within hearing. The obstinacy related to George's persistency in taking his night walks in the grounds. It has been a grievous confinement for my mother: *she* went out a night or two ago for a stroll at dusk, and was unfortunately seen by Mrs. Penn. Hill was so cross that Mrs. Penn should have gone near the pine walk."

"How much does Madame de Mellissie know of this?" I asked.

"She was cognizant of the crime George was accused of having committed, and that he was in exile. She also knew that we always lived in dread of his coming to Chandos; and for that reason, did not welcome strangers here."

"And yet she brought, and left me!"

"But you have not proved a dangerous inmate, my dear one."

It was kind of him to say that, but I feared I had. That Mrs. Penn had contrived to give notice to Edwin Barley, or would contrive it, was only too probable. Once the house should be opened in the morning, nothing could hinder her. Troubled and fearful, I had not spoken for some minutes, neither had he, when Madame de Mellissie's voice was heard in the hail, and he left the room.

She came into it, crossing him on the threshold. Just casting an angry and contemptuous glance on me (and she had given me nothing else since her arrival) she withdrew again, and shut the door with a heavy bang, coming back in a short while.

"Closeted with my brother as usual!" she began, as if not one minute instead of ten had elapsed since seeing me with Mr. Chandos. "Why do you put yourself continuously in his way?"

"Did you speak to me, Madame de Mellissie?" I asked, really doubting if the attack could be meant for me.

"To whom else should I speak?" she returned, in a passionate and abrupt tone. "How dare you presume to seek to entangle Mr. Harry Chandos?"

"I do not understand you, Madame de Mellissie. I have never yet sought to entangle any one."

"You have; you know you have," she answered, giving the reins to her temper. "I know; I have heard. You and he have dined alone, sat alone, walked alone; been together always. Is it seemly that you, a dependant governess-girl, should cast a covetous eye upon a Chandos?"

My heart was beginning to beat painfully. What defence had I to make?

"Why did you leave me here, madame?"

"Leave you here! Because it suited my convenience. I did not expect you to make yourself into my brother's companion, or allow him to make you his. Had you not been lost to all sense of the fitness of things, you would have kept yourself out of the notice of Mr. Harry Chandos."

"To whom are you speaking, Emily?" demanded a quiet voice behind us.

It was his; it was his. I drew back with a sort of gasping sob.

"I am speaking to Anne Hereford," she defiantly answered.

"Yes. And to my future wife."

The crimson colour flashed into her beautiful face. "Harry!"

"Therefore I must beg of you to treat Miss Hereford accordingly."

"Are you mad, Harry?"

"Perfectly sane, I hope."

"It cannot be your intention to marry *her*? How can you think of so degrading yourself?"

"You are mistaking the case altogether, Emily. I, and my family with me, will be honoured by the alliance."

"What on earth do you mean?"

A half smile crossed his face at her wondering look, but he gave no explanation: perhaps the time had not come. I escaped from the room, and he came after me.

"Anne, I want you to go with me to the west wing. George says he should like to see you."

I went up with him at once. George Heneage—I cannot call him Chandos, and indeed he had never assumed the name—sat in the same easy-chair with the pillows at his back. Mr. Chandos put me a seat near, and he took my hands within his wasted ones. They called him better. Better! He, with the white, drawn face, the glassy eyes, the laboured breath!

"My little friend Anne! Have you quite forgotten me?"

"No ; I have remembered you always, Mr. Heneage. I am sorry to see you look so ill."

"Better that I should look so. My life is a burden to me, and to others. I have prayed to God a long while to take it, and I think He has at last heard me. Leave us, Harry, for a few minutes."

I felt half frightened as Mr. Chandos went out. What could he want with me?—and he looked so near death!

"You have retained a remembrance of those evil days?" he abruptly began, turning on the pillow to face me.

"Every remembrance, I think. I have forgotten nothing."

"Just so : they could but strike forcibly on a child's heart. Well, ever since Harry told me that it was *you* who were in this house, a day or two back now, I have thought I must see you at the last. I should not like to die leaving you to a wrong impression. You have assumed, with the rest of the world, that I murdered Philip King?"

I hesitated, really not knowing what to say.

"But I did not murder him. The shot from my gun killed him, but not intentionally. As Heaven, soon to be my judge, hears me, I tell you the truth. Philip King had angered me very much. As I saw him in the distance smoking a cigar, his back against the tree's trunk, I pointed my gun at him, and put my finger on the trigger, saying, 'How I should like to put a shot into you!' Without meaning it—without meaning it, the gun went off, Anne : my elbow caught against the branch of a tree, and it went off and shot him. I had rather—yes, even then—that it had shot myself."

"But why did you not come forward and say so, Mr. Heneage?"

"Because the fact paralysed me, making me both a fool and a coward, and the moment for avowal went by; passed for ever. I would have given my own life to undo my work and restore that of Philip King. It was too late. All was too late. So I have lived on as I best could, hiding myself from the law, an exile from my country, my wife a stranger to me; regarded by the world as a murderer, liable to be called upon at any moment to expiate it, and with a man's death upon my soul. Over and over again would I have given myself up, but for the disgrace it would bring to my family."

"I thought it might be an accident, Mr. Heneage—have always thought it," I said, with a sigh of relief.

"Thank God, yes! But the wicked wish had been there, though uttered in reckless sport. Oh child, don't you see how glad I shall be to go? Christ has washed away sins as red as mine. Not of my sins, comparatively speaking, has the care lain heavily upon me night and day; but of another's."

Did he mean Selina's? "Of whose, sir?"

"Philip King's. I gave him no time to pray for them. There's a verse in the Bible, Anne, that has brought me comfort at times," he

whispered with feverish eagerness, gazing at me with his earnest, yearning eyes. "When the disciples asked of the Redeemer who then can be saved? there came in answer the loving words, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

He might not have said more; I don't know; but Hill came in, to announce Dr. Laken. Her face of astonishment when she saw me sitting there was ludicrous to behold. George Heneage wrung my hand as I left him.

"You see, Hill, they ask me in here of themselves," I could not help saying, in a sort of triumph, as she held the green baize door open for me.

Hill returned a defiant grunt by way of answer, and I brushed past Dr. Laken as he came along the gallery with another gentleman, who was dressed in the garb of a clergyman.

(To be concluded in our next number.)



LONG AGO.

I.

LONG ago we two were one,
You and I, in pain and pleasure;
Laughed in shade, or basked in sun;
Drank this life from one full measure.

Who should say

Would come the day,

When something more than land or sea

Should barren lie 'twixt you and me?

So long ago!

What silent depths this life may show,

'Mid all its whirling, gasping fever!—

Single hours drip dull and slow,

But time runs on for ever!

II.

Long ago, all fresh and young,

You and I were fair spring blossoms;

Hope found strength, each thought a tongue

Within our pure, unselfish bosoms.

Time unseen,

Blooms now as green

As if we hand in hand had stayed,

While toiling years their passage made.

So long ago!

Our passions whirl us to and fro,

And in the struggle hearts must sever—

Single hours drip dull and slow,

But time runs on for ever!

WILLIAM DUTHIE.

THE STORY OF THE BLIND BEGGAR.

I.

“ By his evening fire the artist
 Pondered o'er his secret shame ;
 Baffled, weary, and disheartened,
 Still he mused and dreamed of fame.”

AYE, there he sat alone, quite alone, a man young in years, himself a most beautiful creation of the Great Artist's hand, the mellowed rays of the summer evening sun falling on the drooping form and dark Italian face, with its broad imaginative brow, and deep, somewhat melancholy, eyes.

Suddenly he rose up to his full height.

“ Strange, how that poem is in my head now ; it is true :

“ That is best which lieth nearest,
 Shape from this thy work of art.”

“ Is the gift departed that I can create no face to-day that pleases me, that can approach my ideal ? Has my right hand lost its cunning, when one rare gem of art will place fame at my feet ? I will leave this place and return to my own land again for awhile, to Firenze, the city of Michael-Angelo. One more glance round and then Guido Sfonza takes wing.”

But at the door the artist turned back, took up his sketch-book and pencil, and went out.

The vesper bells had just ceased ringing, and the quaint, picturesque old Flemish town was very quiet, even the market-place was almost deserted. There Guido Sfonza paused, and shading his eyes with his slender hand from the bright rays of the sinking sun, looked around.

The tall, quaint, old gabled houses were familiar objects ; he had sat down on this very spot last market-day and sketched the busy scene ; equally familiar was the picturesque grey old church of the Augustines, which, with the monastery, formed the southern boundary of the market-place ; yet familiar as it was, it was so picturesque, with its deep porch and graceful arch, so harmonious in all its proportions, that the painter's artist-eye could not turn from it, the more that, as he looked, he saw a picture which the background and marked light and shade made perfect. Guido Sfonza sat down on the step of the ancient sun-dial near him, and gazed in rapt artistic delight. He had found an ideal—a living picture. Partially within the shelter of the church porch stood an old man, dressed in a long dark gown, not unlike a Jewish gaberdine ; his head was bare, and the soft evening breeze timidly lifted his long white hair and beard, so white that where the sunbeams touched it, it shone like silver. He was old, his face was deeply lined, but neither age,

sorrow, nor suffering, could rob that fine face and grand head of their beauty. Nature's chisel had carved her work too well for aught to mar her handiwork. Time might steal away the charm of youth; care might draw her heaviest lines; but still—

“The mind, the music breathing o'er that face,
The heart whose softness harmonized the whole,”

remained untouched; even the very straining, almost agonized, upward look of the blind—for he was blind—as if the sightless eye-balls still strained yearningly after the lost light, only gave to that countenance a yet more touching interest. One hand, wrinkled now with age, but still finely formed, held his hat for such charity as the passers-by might give, and on its brim rested a black cross and rosary, held between his fingers; the other hand of the blind beggar rested on the shoulder of his companion and guide, a girl, nay, almost a child, scarcely over thirteen years, and well might the young artist start at such strange and wonderful beauty. The face was of the most perfect oval, exquisitely soft in its outlines and shading, the brow broad, full, not high, imaginative, and rather marked by its purity and sentiment, than for any unusual powers of intellect; the delicate mouth, the large melancholy dark eyes, the patient, sorrowful brow, were full of a sweet and gentle resignation, that gave to her very attitude a singular and indescribable charm: neither could have been born to the position in which they appeared; and with the girl especially, there was under all the patient resignation a proud suffering endurance that touched the artist even more than her youth and beauty. What wonder that the painter gazed long on the old man and the child, printing off every line, every shade and colour, indelibly on his mind, and then opening his sketch-book rapidly, and with the skill of true genius transferred the picture to his paper.

The few passers-by took little notice of the young Italian; artists often came to their town, often sketched the halle; still oftener the old church of the Augustine Monastery; so it was nothing new to the good townfolk, who were rather flattered than otherwise. One handsome peasant woman was vain or curious enough to pause and ask—*Monsieur finds the church beautiful, n'est-ce pas?* The handsome Italian face was lifted with a bright smile, that showed the white teeth as he answered, *C'est vrai, madame; mais regardez ces deux mendiants. Who are they?*

“Ah, monsieur, nobody knows,” the woman answered, shaking her head till her long ear-drops tinkled again; “they were first seen in that porch a short while ago:—*pauvre vieillard*, he is blind. Ah! it is a terrible misfortune.”

“So terrible,” said the artist, more to himself than her, “that I had rather die than live in blindness.”

The woman smiled as she looked on the speaker's dark magnificent eyes.

"Assurément, madame la Sainte Vierge will spare Monsieur," she said, as she passed on with a cheery bonsoir.

The artist worked at his sketch, and the time fled so quickly that the fading light first made him notice that evening was creeping on apace, and vespers were over. He closed his book and rose, watching how many of the worshippers in leaving would give alms to the blind man and his young companion.

Drawing nearer, he noticed, as first one and then another dropped some small coin into the hat, that the old man seemed to shrink; and the child visibly shivered more than once as the sweet musical voice murmured a half timid "merci;" nearer still the painter drew, as the last worshipper passed on her homeward way, but paused under shelter of the column, as the old man's voice struck his ear.

"Oh, child, it is killing me hour by hour. But for thee, my darling, I would pray God in his mercy to take back the soul he has lent to earth. When I am gone, what will become of thee, chérie—what will become of thee, Agathe? Oh, when thy dying father left his only child to my care, he little dreamed that she would stand the guide of a blind, helpless old man to ask alms of every passing stranger."

There was a second's pause, as if the child was mastering some strong emotion, ere she answered with inexpressible love and tenderness:

"Do not think of me, mon bon père; do not grieve; God will take care of me."

"Ah, chérie, but the heart will sorrow, and the brain think, and I am in darkness, bearing a weight of years and afflictions. Oh, child, learn by me how God punishes man's pride; He has brought down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Come now, Agathe; the sun has set, and it grows chill, my darling."

Guido Sfonza drew back as the wanderers left the church and stole away.

Who and what were they? what was the romance of those two lives? Agathe! the name dwelt on his ear like music; it was the very name for her; they would surely be in that porch again on the morrow, and then he would speak to them; meanwhile he would at once begin transferring his picture to canvas, the vivid imagination had carried away every detail of form and shade and colouring, which the sketch of course lacked. All the next day the young artist worked, full of renewed hope and energy, but when the church bells rang out for vespers, he closed his studio and again turned into the halle. Ah, search in vain! those bright dark eyes will see no blind beggar or Agathe this evening, or to-morrow, or to-morrow! He came for many evenings; he inquired everywhere for them; all knew who he meant, but none could tell anything about them, or had seen them depart; yet gone they were; nor could all

Guido's efforts find any trace of the singular originals of the picture, at which he now laboured from sunrise to sunset. A long day, some might say, but to the artist it seemed far too short, for

" His heart was in his work,
And the heart
Giveth grace unto every art."

And when at last, after days and weeks of labour, his work was completed and the painter looked upon it, his lip smiled. Genius had indeed vindicated herself. The picture was a masterpiece.

II.

It hung low on the walls of a great picture-dealer's exhibition, where every visitor could see it as well as if it was in his own house. It was catalogued simply "*The Blind Beggar—Guido Sfonza*," but though there were many larger, there was always a little crowd before it. Yes, though it was neither very large nor brilliant in colouring, though it was of quite moderate size, in a plain black frame sheltered by a glass, though the colouring was so exquisitely soft and subdued: enfin, though the picture was so very beautiful, it was unmistakably the lion of the exhibition. The painter's fame was established and his name lifted high; he might too have become the fashion, for his birth was as noble as his genius was elevated, but he was too wise and too ambitious for himself, and above all for his art. Now in his ripe manhood was the time to labour and to work.

Did the picture go back to its owner's studio, then? No, the committee of the National Gallery, entering the lists with several other competitors, outbid them all, and, paying a high price for the painting, placed it amongst the national collections, where the humblest might freely see it.

Little wotted any one that soon in the painter's studio there hung another portrait, for which he would not have taken its weight in gold; still less could they have guessed that, when he once more left England it was to wander from city to city, in a half romantic, half acknowledged search for the original, whose name, Agathe, his hand had traced beneath her portrait.

Smile not, reader, as if your youth had never had its romance. Whose has not? though few will ever tell the story. And Guido da Sfonza was an Italian, gifted with the sensitive, high-wrought artistic temperament; gifted, not cursed, as some have been; for in him Nature had blended with it such sweetness and grace, that the curse was gone and only the gift left behind. Leave him then to his art-work, and his graceful romance; the strong hand will accomplish that which the fine intellect dictates, but it will weave his romance like a thread of gold through all it touches.

Once, and once only, the artist found a trace, a sad one, for it led no further, and ended where it began—in a grave.

Wandering one bright day into a little churchyard on the outskirts of Brussels, he sat down to rest awhile on a humble grave, marked only by a cross at its head: it bore no date, or if there was one it was placed where it needed some search to find it. One foot of the little cross bore only a name and a Latin inscription:

"Louis-Charles de Rohan."
Quem Deus amat castigat.

"What story lies buried there, that so noble a name is found on this quiet grave?" murmured the artist, half aloud.

"Ah, mon fils, a sad one,—a sad story," said a gentle voice. The painter looked up, and instantly rose, reverently doffing his hat, as he saw that the speaker was not only an old man, but a priest. "It is nigh twelve months since my hands administered the last sacrament to him whose body sleeps beneath this earth. God rest his soul, for his had been indeed a life, long and laden with sorrows."

"You knew him, then, holy father?" said Guido; and as the old man sat down on the grave, the younger threw himself on the grass at his feet.

"No, my son; not as you mean. I never saw him until three days before his death, when his grandchild fetched me to him. What was he? Hélas! you see that proud name! yet when I followed that child, I found a poor blind old beggar, dying in an empty granary near my cottage."

The artist started so visibly that the priest must have noticed it, save that tears blinded his eyes. He wiped them away and went on.

"I assisted him to my own cottage,—for was he not a wayfarer, in want and suffering?" said the good old man; "and there in three days he died, his only anxiety his grandchild's fate. He told me his story, and pardon me if I am abrupt, for it is sad and painful. He was a proud Rohan, a lad, when his parents lost their lives in the French Revolution. Louis-Charles escaped into Italy, where he afterwards married an Italian lady, by whom he had four children. All died in youth but one son; the mother also died broken-hearted, and Louis-Charles plunged deeper still into politics, even venturing back to France. He was taken and imprisoned for five years, when, old man as he then was, he escaped back to Germany, to find his only son a widower with one child, Agathe, who soon became her grandfather's darling. But soon their only prop was gone, for the younger Rohan fell in a duel: weeping destroyed the old man's waning sight, and ere long he took Agathe and went forth destitute in his old age, a blind beggar! That is his sad story."

"What became of the child?" said Guido, raising himself.

"Ah! that is a mystery, mon fils. I would fain have kept her, but

she grew restless, and one day she went away, promising to return if she ever needed a friend. That is all."

Six months later Guido Sfonza returned to that quiet village, but the good old priest was gone, none knew whither.

But young as he was, there lay in the artist's nature a fine and delicate thread of golden patience. Though weeks became months, and months passed into three more years, still he watched and waited, working for bread, for fame, and for *her*, never losing sight of that Madonna-like face. Would it ever become a reality to him?

III.

"MONSIEUR will never reach Beauvais in safety; the sun has set behind the Pyrenees already, and the road is lonely. Monsieur will be robbed, *assurément*."

The place was the space in front of a small and very shy-looking auberge on the road to Beauvais, in the Pyrenees; the speaker, the aubergiste, a rough, ill-looking sans-culotte; the listener a young rider, in whose graceful figure and fine face we see again the now famous painter. The time, singularly enough, was the day, almost to the hour, just four years from that evening, when he had sketched the Blind Beggar.

But the artist only laughed at the aubergiste. His property was safe in Beauvais; his revolver was loaded; and so he pursued his lonely way, and disappeared in the fast-falling darkness.

Somewhere about two hours after he had left, a handsome travelling-carriage passed by the same way, and without stopping, drove along the same lonely road, and also vanished in the darkness.

The first cold grey dawn of the summer's morning was just beginning to break the darkness, when the same travelling carriage drove at a gallop into the picturesque little town, which we have called Beauvais, and pulled up before the Hôtel Maurice, at the great door of which one of the tall chasseurs in attendance played so loud and sharp a summons, that the worthy hôte sprang out of bed, and threw up the window in alarm.

The chasseur saw him, and called sharply,—

"Holà! vite! Courez à toutes jambes! c'est M. le Marquis d'Hauteville!"

The words produced a magic effect; mine host flung on his clothes, furiously rung the servants' alarum, and in five minutes the whole house was alive; the host precipitated himself downstairs, and, followed by Jean-Baptiste bearing a light, threw wide the great door.

A fine benevolent-looking man, past middle age, a military man evidently, was looking eagerly out of the carriage window.

"Be quick," he cried out, "or my charge will die in my arms. Gaultier!

Martinet! help me to carry him in. Monsieur Maurice," to the host, "send directly for the cleverest doctor you have, and for a nurse, a *sœur de charité* from La Sainte Thérèse, hard by."

These orders were spoken with military precision; the one man's energy made them all fly far quicker than it takes to write it. Then M. Maurice had time to see that on a sort of stretcher, placed aslant the seats, there lay the insensible form of a man, covered with the marquis' own cloak, his head lying on the old soldier's breast.

"Doucement, doucement, mes braves?" he said, as his own servants came up, and with all the tenderness of the strong to the weak and suffering, gently lifted the motionless form, and laid it on the litter. The host preceding, the marquis following, they bore it upstairs to a large chamber and laid it on the bed.

"Mon ami Maurice," said Hauteville, in his rapid way, "you know me. I am so bound for time in my journey, that I must go on the moment. The doctor and nurse will come, but I shall be back in a few weeks; spare no expense on this brave boy, yes, boy to my grey hairs, though the beard is on his lip. Ah! who comes there? Enter, M. le médecin. *Soyez le bienvenu.*"

Dr. Regnard was not alone. There followed him with noiseless step, and garments that made no rustle, a young and beautiful woman, in the familiar dress of a *sœur de charité*. She returned the soldier's salute, and advancing, at once threw back the mantle and loosened the dress of the wounded man, that the doctor might examine the wound.

"It is a deep one, I fear," said the marquis, as Dr. Regnard bent over the painter's motionless form. "I bound it up as well as I could; but it had bled horribly, and still does, I much fear."

"It is a very dangerous wound, monsieur, and has only just missed the heart," pronounced the doctor, after a close examination. "Nothing but the utmost care can save his life. *Sœur Marguerite*, we must quite stop this bleeding first; then try to recover consciousness."

"I will give a hundred napoleons for this one life," said the marquis, strongly. "Anything—only save it. It *must* be saved."

Dr. Regnard quietly and quickly proceeded to stop the bleeding, and dress the wound; and then, while Maurice went for the restoratives he needed, he remarked, confidently:

"Ah, ça. Is this young man monsieur's son?"

"No: a stranger—quite a stranger. I was driving rapidly when, just where the road passes the Pont du Diable range, we heard the report of firearms in quick succession. We dashed on, but too late; the villains had fled, leaving their victim wounded, probably thinking him dead. Near him I picked up this phial, with some dark liquid still in it; the rest had evidently been insolently flung on his face, and had fallen on or near his eyes. Poor boy!—I fear he is terribly hurt."

Dr. Regnard took the bottle, then stooped suddenly over Guido's

deathlike face and closed eyes. Only the religieuse heard him murmur :

"Oh, pauvre garçon ! what if they have done for him ?"

The host re-entered with brandy and other things ; and though D'Hauteville had said he could not stop, he lingered.

"I must see life restored," he whispered. "Does his heart yet beat ?"

The sœur laid her soft, cool hand on Guido's breast, and half shook her head, sadly.

"Its beat is so feeble that it is scarcely perceptible."

"Raise his head again, mon enfant," said Dr. Regnard, in that quietly confident way which makes a clever physician come like an angel of light and saving power. And the sœur obeyed, resting the poor head on her breast.

But neither brandy nor anything else seemed to take the least effect. The heart just beat—no more ; only then perceptible to the light touch of the nun and the doctor.

"His life-blood has ebbed away," said the marquis, turning aside, as the sun rose higher and higher in the blue heavens.

"No ; grâce à Dieu, no," said the sœur de charité, suddenly ; "there is warmth coming in the fingers, after all these hours of anxiety, and the heart now beats unmistakably."

"We will try some more eau-de-vie," said Dr. Regnard. "How close the white teeth are set !" then, after watching a few more minutes : "M. le Marquis, you may continue your voyage : our charge is out of immediate danger ; life returns slowly."

Even then Hauteville lingered ; but his business was pressing, and he was obliged to take leave, repeating his charge that no expense was to be spared : he would be responsible. And so he went on his way, truly a good Samaritan.

The moment Dr. Regnard was alone with the sœur, he sent a prescription up to his own surgery, and pulled down the blind, even drawing the window-curtains also, as soon as a slight movement and half-drawn sigh from the sufferer showed returning consciousness. The nun lifted her beautiful, Madonna-like face in surprise, asking :

"Pourquoi, monsieur ; is not the blind enough ?"

"No, sœur Marguerite, I think not. Ah, listen !"

A soft feeble voice was murmuring some words in Italian, evidently wandering.

"Where am I ? Is that your hand on mine, madre, mia dolce ? how dark it is !"

"What does he say ?" whispered the doctor, hastily catching at one of the last words.

The sœur repeated it in French ; and, still more to her surprise, Dr. Regnard immediately glided to the window, and closed the shutters,

leaving the room almost totally dark, so that each could only dimly discern the other's outline. The nun shivered, beginning to fear or suspect so awful a calamity for the sufferer that her very heart stood still, and speech failed her. A few minutes and the wounded man moved a little, speaking again, but in French.

"What is this pain? where am I? How dark—how very dark it is!"

"You have been badly wounded," said the doctor: "you are in my care and in that of the *sœur Marguerite*. I have darkened the room: it is quite dark."

"Is that all? Oh, my head! Is it so very dark then?"

"Quite dark," said the nun; "but you must be quiet."

The doctor, who had gone to the door, now returned with some phials, a glass, and a basin of hot water. Into this he emptied one small phial, and then giving another to *Marguerite*, bade her administer the dose.

She obeyed. The doctor stood listening till he heard *Guido's* soft regular breathing.

"Eh bien, il dort," he said; "that is what I want. Now open the shutters, and wash his brow and eyes well with this hot water. He will not wake for hours."

The nurse obeyed him, and when she put down the basin *Dr. Regnard* gave a long sigh of relief.

"I hope—yes, I will dare to hope—that I have baffled the most accursed intentions of the villain who used that phial. Now, *ma sœur*, I am going away for a few hours. I shall return before he wakes. Stay: there is a signet ring on his finger; see if you can there find any clue to his identity: he may be some one who has friends in *Beauvais*."

She softly drew off the ring—a curious family heirloom of antique Italian workmanship; a crest and motto were graven on the ruby, but inside the broad gold hoop was engraved, evidently of recent date, the present owner's name.

"*Monsieur*," said the nun, replacing the ring, "it is the painter, *Guido Sfonza*."

"Then, indeed, *sœur Marguerite*," said the doctor, solemnly, "pray, that God may send my efforts success, and give me almost more than human skill, or the painter's bread and handiwork are gone." And with that he hurried out.

IV.

SOMEWHERE about noon the patient watcher heard the sleeper move; the shutters were open, though the blind and curtains were closed. As she reached the bed side, *Guido* tried to lift his head, and spoke collectedly. The mind was only too active now.

"Where am I?—is any one here?—is it night?—it is so dark that I cannot see."

But the next moment, before the nun could answer, there came such a cry as few ever hear, and hearing once can never forget.

"Mercy! oh mercy! *I am blind!*"

The nun laid one soft, firm hand over the darkened eyes, and the other on the dangerous wound, lest, in his awful agony, he should disturb the bandages and bleed to death.

"Be calm, for the sake of those that love you; for the love and hope of life and sight try and keep down all agitation."

As the sweet, musical voice struck his ear, he started: it seemed as if he had heard one like it long ago—in dreams it might be—and it had a power over him that no other voice could have had. He sank back, every nerve quivering with a fierce agony that tried her terribly to witness: the more so that he struggled so bravely against it, prostrate and weak as he was. He did not even try to move her guarding hands or speak. The blow had gone too deep for any utterance, save in that one awful cry. So for a few moments of deathlike stillness he lay, and then a light step entered the room. The ear, strung to the highest pitch of nervous tension, heard it directly.

"Who is that? Oh, give me light, or let me die!"

"Hush! Sin not, lest a worse thing come upon thee, and God, in punishment, grant thy wish," said the gentle religieuse.

Dr. Regnard advanced, and putting his cool hand on the sufferer's burning fingers, said, in his quiet, kind way,—

"I had hoped that you would not have made this discovery till you were stronger; as it is, it is best to speak out at once. You are in the hands of a skilful *sœur de charité*, and I hope of a skilful physician; you have been attacked, I suspect, by *Mortéblé's* gang; you are dangerously wounded; and, worse than that, he has flung on your eyes a poison he uses, which, had it gone fully on them, must have hopelessly destroyed the sight. I hope that we may avert such an affliction; but I tell you frankly that I am in great uncertainty. When you can bear the worst, I will test whether the sight is already destroyed, or whether the seat of it remains."

"Test it now—now—or I shall go mad with horror and suspense," Guido answered.

"Eh bien! courage donc! It is dark to you, n'est-ce pas? Notice, and answer carefully and calmly."

The unfortunate artist clasped his fingers close round the nun's hand, as if in her touch there was strength, and answered, "It is dark."

Dr. Regnard closed the shutters, and held them so that not one ray of light strayed through.

"Now—is it lighter or darker?"

"Darker—dense darkness! Oh, light, give me light!"

Dr. Regnard threw back the shutters and curtains, but left the blind, lest the blaze of sunlight should work the very evil he dreaded.

"Is there any difference?" he asked, exchanging a meaning look with the *sœur*.

"It is lighter—much lighter."

"Once more." He lighted a small wax taper, and held it about two feet from the patient's eyes. "Are you conscious of any change?"

"Yes." The voice was very weak, but nothing could rob it of its soft and musical cadence. "I perceive a redness in the atmosphere, as if a light was near me."

"God be thanked! The sight itself is still there—injured, but not destroyed. With care, patience, and *sœur* Marguerite's good nursing, we will, under Heaven, get you back strength and the blessing of vision—perhaps in a few months."

"Months!"

"Chut!—there must be no agitation, no despair. Ma *sœur*, keep a subdued light, and wash the eyes with this mixture every three hours."

He then drew her aside, gave her the medicines and further orders.

"It hangs on a hair whether we save him or not," he whispered. "I fear fever and inflammation. If he sleeps through to-night without it, then the danger will pass. I shall return at sunset to take watch and watch with you. I would not trust him to any one else. I will tell Maurice what to send up for him as I go down." And he quietly went out. Guido Sfonza was in clever hands.

When the clock the next morning pointed to seven the wounded man still slept—sleeping as evenly and lightly as a child. Dr. Regnard was also sleeping in a large English easy-chair, and the *sœur de charité* sat by the bedside, patient, wakeful, watchful. While they slept she had prayed. But three days passed before Dr. Regnard pronounced his patient out of danger, and a full week before he would allow him to speak: indeed, Guido had little wish or power to do so, so great was the prostration from loss of blood. At the end of the week, however, the doctor began to give him everything that was strengthening, both in food and medicines. So well did his skilful treatment hit the exact mark, so subtle and perfect was the vitality of a constitution so finely organized that perhaps few could rival it, that the painter soon began slowly but surely to recover. The first thing he asked his untiring nurse was to whom he owed his rescue. Marguerite told him the story. All the painter said was, "Now, indeed, may God give me life and vision that I may show my deep gratitude to all who have been so kind to me. But I need be no charge to that noble-hearted man, for I had forwarded on my own property, if you will send for it, to the *Hôtel de la Fontaine*. Will he return to Beauvais, ma *sœur*?"

"Not for some time," the nun answered.

In truth, Dr. Regnard had written to M. d'Hauteville, requesting him not to come till he wrote again, for he feared any agitation or emotion for the patient.

"I wonder," said the invalid, as he lay one morning on the sofa, to which he could now be moved,—“I wonder, *sœur Marguerite*, if you are like what my imagination pictures you.”

It was well that he could not see the sudden flush which rose painfully to the nun's colourless face, or the quivering lip and deeply sorrowful shadow to which it gave place. She answered in her gentle way and with that haunting voice of hers: “The imagination will often deceive by a fair picture where the reality is far below it.”

“Ah! too often, but surely not here. You are young, by your touch, your voice, your head.”

“I am not yet quite nineteen, M. da Sfonza.”

“Shall I tell you what my picture is like?”

“No,” she said, a little hurriedly; “this miserable humanity is not worth it.”

Guido turned his face towards her as if he could *see* her, and his hand trembled. Was a new sorrow coming upon him? Was he growing false to Agathe, forgetting his ideal, his poet love? No; the ideal was taking form in his vivid imagination, and the two were blending into one.

The voice was the echo of his dreams and his memory, and the face his imagination gave to his gentle nurse was the sorrowful Madonna face his genius had given to the world long ago. Oh! for sight, the blessed sight we never value fully till we lose it or are losing it!

One morning, it might be nearly three months since he had been brought to the Hôtel Maurice, he was preparing to walk in the garden with his faithful guide—for his blindness and the need of constantly applying the remedies made it still necessary for her to be with him all day—when Dr. Regnard came into the pretty little salon.

“How are you this morning?” he asked, cheerily. “That Italian face of yours ought to lose its troubled, anxious look, now that you are getting stronger.”

“Ah! Monsieur, but I am still blind,” was the touching answer.

“Ca! I deny that,” said Dr. Regnard, pleasantly. “I think we shall soon send *sœur Marguerite* back to La Sainte Thérèse. Her care and attention, quite as much as my skill, have ensured the restoration of sight. Come now, I am sure you can find the *sœur* yourself; turn, look; yes, *look* for her.”

When the doctor spoke of sending her away she had drawn suddenly back and stood gazing out of the window. The artist turned towards the light by instinct; he had long perceived the light.

“Ah!” he cried, suddenly, almost wildly, “I can see plainly as through a blackened glass, the outlines of a dark form against the light;

Marguerite is in the window." And walking straight to her, he laid his hand on her shoulder.

"A few more days," said the physician, "you will see. Once more Guido Sfonza will belong to the world and to art."

The artist smiled, and linking his arm in Marguerite's, passed out with her into the flower-garden.

"Can you see your convent?" he asked.

"The western wing and refectory; trees hide the rest."

"Oh! how can any man or woman immure themselves within the walls of a convent," said the painter, "when God gave us the wide world to work in? how ever can you sisters of charity, who indeed do blessed works, bind yourselves by vows on which there can be no blessing, a burden grievous to be borne? But pardon! you will deem me a heretic," he added, smiling; "you, a vowed *sœur de charité*."

"No," said the religieuse, quietly, "for in that we stand on equally heretical ground; I am not a vowed nun, not even a novice, though only our *Mère Angélique* knows it. I am alone and friendless, and she permitted me to assume the habits and duties of a *sœur*—on trial. I may leave at any time, but if I remain another month, I must take the vows, as the three years allowed me expire."

The painter made no answer: perhaps he could not, fearful of giving way to the least emotion. A minute after, he turned the subject.

The next morning, when the *sœur* came, the worthy host told her that when he went as usual to assist his charge to dress, he had said that he had passed a somewhat restless night.

"M. da Sfonza was very anxious for you to come, madame," added M. Maurice. "I left him seated in the large *fauteuil*, I think asleep."

"*Merci*." The nurse stole very softly into the little salon. The painter was sitting in the easy-chair, his fine head resting on his hand, his dark eyes closed; he slept. The *sœur* bent over him and very gently washed his eyes with a new lotion that Dr. Regnard had used for the last week. He did not wake, but only moved and murmured some words in Italian, smiling, as if even in sleep he was conscious of her presence; but she turned away behind the window curtain, covering her face; to her the one bright page of her young life was closing in darkness; and yet, true woman to the core, she had only rejoicing and thanks for the good vouchsafed to the one she loved, though it was to part her from him for ever. So an hour passed unheeded, and then, with a deep-drawn sigh, Guido Sfonza awoke. The next moment he sprang to his feet, the large brilliant eyes wide open, "*Merciful Heaven! the awful blindness is gone! I see! I see once more! Oh! where is Marguerite, that I may tell her, see her at last!*"

"She is here, to rejoice with those that do rejoice," said the sweet voice, and the *sœur* came forward; but her close headdress had got loosened, and her golden hair fell on her shoulders.

The painter took one step forward, one word passed his lips as he saw her face.

"Agathe!"

The face of his dreams; the face he had searched for, waited, watched for for years, in unwearied patience.

"Yes, Agathe," she said, trembling; "Agathe de Rohan. How did Monsieur know it?"

"Agathe, I first heard the sweet name from your blind grandfather as you stood under the porch of the Augustine Church in that old French town, you must remember. I painted you both; the picture upon which my fame was first built. Through all these long four years I have wandered, searching for the lost Agathe. I heard of you once from an old priest!"

"Dear old man! These three years confessor at la Sainte Thérèse," murmured Agathe.

"And there I lost all trace of my ideal," he continued, "until I awoke to find it a reality at my side, a gentle nurse, a ministering angel. Oh! Agathe, my first and only love, will you not accept the life and sight you have in part won back from death. Let me at least try and teach Agathe to love Guido Sfonza."

"He has taught her that already," whispered the soft voice; and she hid her face on the painter's breast.

There was a quiet marriage one sunlit morning in the convent chapel, performed by the venerable Père Eugène. The Marquis d'Hauteville would allow none but his hand to give a wife to Guido Sfonza.

In Dr. Regnard's salon there hangs now a portrait of Agathe, and the Marquis d'Hauteville's private chapel is graced by a noble altar-piece, which no lover of art can pass by.

Père Eugène, now a very old white-haired man, loves best to sit under the orange trees, or on the terrace of the painter's Florentine villa, with Guido's little son on his knee; and then, when the pretty boy and his sister are tired of play, they will run to the padre to ask for, and hear, perhaps for the twentieth time, the Story of the Blind Beggar.

E. STEWART.



* * JOHNNY LUDLOW sends us word that he is gone to the sea-side, and can't write any paper. He intends to send, as usual, next month.—SUB.-ED.

STEADINESS OF PURPOSE.

AMONG the many qualities which kindle an instinctive admiration at first sight, and which win an ever increasing respect as they become more thoroughly known, Steadiness must always take a very high place. And the kind of steadiness that is admired will depend on the appreciative powers of the admirers:—if they be low, they will do homage to mechanical steadiness of execution; if high, they will be reserved for moral Steadiness of Purpose. In the latter case, a man's acts will be, not the subject-matter of admiration, but the evidences of character, according to which admiration is conceded or denied. We know well enough, of course, that the whole moral worth of the action depends upon its purpose; but the purpose is not always self-evident. Only when the purpose is steady and all the moral actions point in one direction, the character is most clearly indicated by them. And if the unity of purpose displayed in the material world can lead men to the acknowledgment of one Divine Creator, it is no great matter for surprise that a similar unity of design, when seen in the moral universe which each man creates for himself, is accepted as proving that their author, their creator, reflects, in his degree and after his power, the Divine Image. Moral Steadiness does not indeed *court* admiration, it does not need to support itself by popular applause, it only reveals itself as it were by accident; but for that very reason we admire it the more. It is like Armida's rose-bud, beautiful in proportion as it avoids self-display. Herein it is most distinct from mechanical steadiness, not merely from its lowest forms, which only exhibit a dexterous hand or an accurate eye, but quite as much from its highest achievements, the parade of punctuality, the righteousness of routine.

We build up our own characters, one stone at a time. There can be in this work no setting up of ready-made pillars, no wholesale transference of ready-cemented masonry. Steadiness of purpose must be our cement, preparing the place for each stone in turn. The sense that our work, once done, must stand, is a safeguard against useless expenditure of strength in unsteady building,—against what is often called aimless or purposeless exertion. In the strictest sense, no act is done without a purpose corresponding to it in the mind of the agent; but practically speaking, every act, of which the purpose is unfixed, is aimless and useless. We know on how high authority a wavering mind, an instability of intention is declared to be a bar to receiving any answer to prayer, and the rule of prayer corresponds so far to the rule of

work. The little pitcher that comes out instead of the *amphora* at first designed, will not be, even as a pitcher, either useful or ornamental. But it is not necessary to dwell upon the evidences that steadiness of purpose is a prerequisite to usefulness:—the practical question is how to acquire and cultivate real steadiness.

Here the great difficulty arises, that there are more counterfeits of what we are seeking for, than there are of Glenfield Starch or Rowland's Kalydor. It may be worth while to describe a few of these spurious articles.

First and worst is *Obstinacy*, which clings, not to one end or purpose, but to one set of means. It is not *tenax propositi*, but *tenax suppositi*. Having once determined for itself (however foolishly or ignorantly) that a certain road leads to its object, it ceases to desire the object unless attainable by that road. Its first care and anxiety thenceforth is to go blindly on in whatever direction the chosen road may take. It is a favourite substitute for steadiness of purpose with not a few statesmen. Its adoption by some popular physicians has killed, in various ages, scores of patients. It left the bones of Xerxes' 'Immortals' to whiten on the ground near Thermopylæ; it recommended the tortures of the Inquisition and kindled the fires of Smithfield. There is scarcely a page of any history wherein some form of it is not to be found. As soon as an individual or a nation feels itself thoroughly committed to seek some great and noble object, the various advocates of obstinacy come in. "It is useless for you," say they, "to seek only to be governed *well*; it is a Platonic notion, may be, but not *practical*. Your object is, to be governed by a democracy, an oligarchy, an absolute monarchy." "Instead of your vague desire to be a good Christian," cries out another set of advisers, "you had better pursue Puritanism, Rationalism, Ritualism." Now it does not matter whether all these things, or any of them, are desirable as *means*:—however good they may be in that capacity, they cannot be pursued as *final objects* by any but the obstinate, who have lost sight of that end which they originally proposed to themselves.

Nearly allied to Obstinacy is another of these spurious substitutes—*Consistency*. It has been called, with some reason, "the bugbear of weak minds." It is always inquiring from every passer-by, "Do I seem to be going quite straight? Have not I gone the least bit out of my way?" It shows an almost ridiculous sensitiveness to the opinion of others, pretending, meanwhile, to hold its own course in noble independence of them. It more frequently looks backward than forward, choosing the self-complacent admiration of its previous path, rather than pressing on steadily to the end: It may perhaps be called a retrospective variety of obstinacy, clinging to its means, not from a persuasion that they are the best means, but only because it has employed them hitherto. It is the slave of habit, of precedent, with

no power of self-adaptation, no obedience ready to accommodate itself to the wiser dictates of a more enlightened conscientiousness. It has not so long since been not a little scandalized to see a Conservative Government pass a Reform Bill. But it is always being shocked at the course of events, until it can content itself in its true place, as handmaiden to Steadiness of Purpose.

It seems hardly fair to set down *Enthusiasm* among the counterfeits of Steadiness of Purpose; but, without accepting the late Bishop of Peterborough's paradox,—that Enthusiasm is one of the things most carefully to be avoided,—we may yet reasonably protest against its undue exaltation; against its being made the chief or the only principle of action. Enthusiasm is good and noble, and worthy of admiration, as long as it is governed by Steadiness; it is bad, and foolish, and despicable, as soon as it claims supremacy and pretends to rule. Like fire, to which it is so often compared, it is a good servant, but a bad master. If it seeks to attain a distant shore, its one idea is to steer straight for the nearest point, without considering whether it will more probably be safely landed in the haven, or dashed in pieces upon the rocks. Whereas, Obstinacy is continually losing the End in the means, Enthusiasm prides itself on a total disregard of means. In religion, it can dispense with forms and rules and sacraments; in war, it can fight without weapons; in architecture, it can build without needing plans or designs.

The last quality which we have space to consider, as claiming for itself the name of Steadiness, is *Earnestness*. Here the distinction, although a real one, is somewhat subtle. When Earnestness becomes abnormally developed, it is not content with going towards its object in any ordinary fashion. To make its pilgrimage painful by every conceivable variety of self-torture—this is the only way to prove its reality and steadfastness of purpose. It would argue that what is easily gained is not worth gaining, and will never be prized, and that the more difficult we make our task, the more blessed it will be to us. It is not, like Enthusiasm, utterly careless about means, but it is very sparing in the use of them, and is especially careful not to choose the readiest or the easiest means. It would rather walk than ride, and would much prefer its hands for walking upon, to its feet. Anything that saves human labour it regards as utterly demoralizing and effeminate.

Does not the consideration of these spurious, self-styled virtues help us to see what true Steadiness of Purpose is? Surely, we have gained some assistance in attaining the true by our exclusion of the false. Not that we must expect to satisfy ourselves by our own Steadiness; the more we have, the more we shall feel our yet remaining deficiency, and the more, too, shall we esteem the steadying influence of other minds upon ours, those other minds being often really receivers, rather than givers, of Steadiness in their intercourse with us. This is one of the

cases where, when the debt on both sides is about equal, each thinks his own obligation the larger.

We will just remark, in conclusion, one or two of the chief characteristics of Steadiness of Purpose. It can never be employed, as all its counterfeits can, in the service of evil. It implies a clear perception and recognition of the object sought. Now, this is what the servant of evil never ventures to desire. He never dares to reveal before his own conscience his real evil purposes, and hence, neither knowing these nor seeking to know them, he cannot be constant to them, or steady in them.

Again, Steadiness of Purpose is capable of helping us in the smallest, as well as in the greatest, events and acts of life. It is not with the moralist as with the economist—"Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves"—but "Take care upon what ruling principle you frame your conduct, and the details of your daily lives will fall easily, and rightly, and naturally under it." Let the purpose of your lives be steady, and your acts will be steady; even your thoughts and wishes will not be fluttering after the unattainable and the impossible. If you lose some pleasant dreams, you will also lose the more bitter awakenings. Only please to accept in friendly mood our parting admonition, and, when you seek for Steadiness of Purpose, "*See that you get it!*"



DREAMS.

A LOVER TO HIS LADY.

Toss your proud head, sweet lady, let your eyes
Flash angry lights upon me when I sue:
Pass with disdain, or hear with cold surprise
I dare to love, and yearn for, such as you;
Throw one kind word, and mete me ten as cold
To feel i' the darkness when my sun is gone.
Nay, spare the warmth your pitying words have doted,
And bid me learn for me you never shone:
Still, when I dream, your little face returns
And sheds warm radiance on me. Could you guess
How your eyes beam and how your fair cheek burns,
You'd hold me wake to grudge the dreamed caress.
So, sweetest lady, all kind arts display,
Lest I, despairing, dream my life away.

STONE LEIGH.

BURIED ALONE.

BY A NEW WRITER.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEXT DAY.

OVER again, in her dreams that night, Lucie Martin went through the evening's performance. But one face haunted her above all others; she listened for the applause of one voice only; success was dear to her for the sake of one being. It will readily be understood that her sleep was feverish, fitful, unrefreshing; and that she awoke in the early morning, thankful that the night was past. Her success was now placed beyond a doubt. She felt that she was an actress in reality, and that her lot in life had been finally cast. And yet there came very distinctly to her a certain knowledge: the knowledge that, dear as were her studies to her; exquisite as was the pleasure she felt in the exercise of her gifts; in the incomparable delight of excelling; all this had given place to a yet stronger power within her—an emotion that she endeavoured to stifle, but which thereby only increased in force: a passion, intense, yet most pure and holy, that she endeavoured to persuade herself was a delusion, but which immediately passed before her eyes in letters of fire, that burnt themselves into her brain and would not be quenched. "I am a truth; a fact: I will make myself heard: I am everlasting." She rose from her bed and threw her arms aloft, as if to drive the phantom from her. "It is madness!" she cried. "It shall not be. I said I could not be the bride of two. I am bound to it; by honour, by love, by fate. Nothing shall alter my determination. I have marked out my path in life and I will fulfil it. I will not swerve to the right hand or to the left. They say I have genius—what is genius? Is it the fire that I feel within me at this moment? Is it this fearful craving after something I do not possess? Is it—" and here a soft, glowing light came into her beautiful eyes, and a warmer tinge spread itself over her pale features—"is it a something that his touch, his words, his looks awoke within me? Ah no! all that is a delusion and a snare; it is folly and madness. It is something that cannot be. Henceforth he will look upon me, think of me, as an actress; a being divided from him as irrevocably as are the moon and the

stars; whom perhaps he will love with a pitying kind of love, but whom he cannot approach further. There is a great gulf between us; one of the great social gulfs that the world rarely spans. He is a gentleman of position, of good descent; I am only Lucie Martin, the actress. The applause of the world will be mine, its people's homage; sufficient, that, to satisfy the craving of this wild, incomprehensible longing. I must rouse myself; I must work; I must deserve my fame, and honour, and wealth, as well as achieve them. Fame to satisfy this longing; honour for the sake of my master and my profession; wealth where with I may do good. Courage, my heart! Courage, for I feel that thou hast need of it."

William Rayner had not entered into the spirit of the opera as intensely as Lord Masseron, but it will readily be imagined that his enjoyment was most keen. Although fond of theatres, his country life had afforded but rare opportunities of visiting them; and this was well, for he was of an ardent nature. When he went to his chamber that night, it was not to sleep. His mind was excited and ill at ease. He had become thoroughly convinced of the reality of his love for Lucie: and the very strength of his passion caused him one moment to be buoyant and full of hope, and the next cast down and depressed. He had admired Lucie when he first saw her, and could almost date his love from that moment. Though he had never spoken the thought, Lucie had from the commencement strangely reminded him of Lord Masseron, and it may be that in the first days this in some degree influenced his mind. His love was not shallow and selfish; it was not the passion of everyday life and everyday people: as he himself was of a rare and exceptional nature, so was his affection. He recognized in Lucie all that was beautiful and pure and good; all that was great and noble and aspiring; all that a man could wish for and glory in possessing; his ambition now was to secure this prize; to make it all his own; to keep it closely and sacredly; to feel that it was his only, for ever and for ever.

No wonder that sleep kept far from him throughout that night, and that he got up in the morning with the determination to put all this beyond doubt. For some hours he lingered restlessly about the drawing-room, and the garden, expecting every moment that Lucie would appear as usual: but finding that she did not do so, he at length determined to call on her.

As chance would have it, Lucie was alone in the drawing-room. She coloured as he entered the room, and a sort of half hope, half fear rose up within her.

Rayner was quite different from his usual self. His face was pale and anxious, his step slow; he seemed to have lost all his courage. But he seated himself near Lucie; so near that he could plainly see her face and

touch her hand : so near that he could almost hear the beating of her heart.

"Lucie," he said, after a few moments' embarrassing silence, "do you know what I have come for?"

"How should I?" she asked. But her voice trembled, and she dared not look at him. "How is Lord Masseron?"

"He is worse than I have yet seen him. You know that he fainted last night after the opera?"

"Fainted!" cried Lucie, in alarm. "Do men ever faint?"

"Not if they are in good health. You know how far George is from that."

"I know. I must go to him; now; at once." And she attempted to rise as she spoke.

"Stay," returned Rayner, detaining her. "Let us for one moment put this sad question aside. I have come here with a purpose, and I must accomplish that purpose. Lucie," he added, taking her hand, and putting a world of tenderness into his voice, "can you not guess it?"

She became painfully agitated and tried to withdraw her hand, but he would not allow it.

"I cannot guess," she half whispered. "What do you mean?"

"I want to know, Lucie, if you will be my wife."

He released her hand then, and it was well that she was seated, for she trembled so violently that she could not have supported herself. Rayner himself in his fearful suspense was scarcely less agitated. She gazed into his face for a moment; the blood flushed into her own, and then left it white even to the lips.

"I cannot," she replied, in a sad but firm tone. "It is an impossibility."

"I will not believe it," cried Rayner, starting up and then reseating himself. "Surely you do not mean to give me that as your answer? I will not take it. Lucie, I believe you love me. I can see it in your eyes: I can feel it in the trembling of your hand. It cannot be impossible unless—unless——"

"It is impossible," interrupted Lucie. "Do not seek to change my resolution, Mr. Rayner. It will put us both to unnecessary pain."

"Then you acknowledge that you love me, Lucie? You must answer me."

She blushed deeply, but did not speak for a moment. That she loved him she knew and felt: loved him as she never would love again. More than this, her heart told her that if she was forced to say No to Rayner, she never would say Yes to any other man. In that moment she would have sacrificed anything for him; herself; all she possessed; everything but what she considered her path of duty. And she considered that out of gratitude alone, she was bound for the sake of her master to follow out her profession. She felt but too certainly that

never again could she give it her undivided heart ; never again could it become an object of equal enthusiasm and ambition to her ; but it was her duty nevertheless, and she would do it. Quiet and pale as people might think her, she possessed one of the strongest, firmest natures in the world. She was one of those few who cannot do one thing and think another : it was utterly impossible for her to act otherwise than in strict accordance with her conscience, in the smallest as in the greatest events of her life. Therefore, whilst to have said Yes to Rayner would have been to bathe her whole life and being in eternal sunshine, she unhesitatingly threw away from her the temptation, and said No.

"You say that you will have a reason," she presently observed. "I will give you one ; it is soon spoken. Not so very long ago I was a poor, unknown girl ; I was alone in the world ; quite friendless. M. Weber discovered me ; he took me by the hand ; he incurred great expenses on my account ; he brought me from France to Italy, and not me only, but also my attendant. He has ever since treated me with the very greatest consideration ; no father could have been kinder to his daughter. They say I have genius ; it is he who has cultivated and strengthened it ; if I ever make way in the world I shall have to thank him for it. He takes not only pleasure, but pride in my progress, and I am persuaded that just now his greatest grief would be to see me suddenly withdraw from my profession. You see, Mr Rayner, that my debt of gratitude to M. Weber is inexhaustible, and that I am positively bound to please him in the best way I can."

"Lucie ! Lucie ! beware that you do not overrate what you call your duty and gratitude. Pause a moment before you finally make us both wretched for life. Is this your only plea for rejecting me ?"

"No. I have yet another. One that *you* will probably think far weightier."

"Let me hear it."

"It is that I am an outcast and nameless. I am called Lucie Martin, but I have no right to the name. In reality I am English, but I do not know who my parents are ; whether they are living or dead. I know nothing of myself. It is not likely that you would marry a poor, unknown being. Your friends would blame you, Mr. Rayner, and they would shun me."

"I have but one real friend in the world," returned Rayner, "and you know how *he* would shun you. Hearing this I would far more earnestly urge you not to refuse me. I have a good and honourable name, and it shall be my pride and glory to offer it to you. None shall dare to blame me : nay, the whole world would envy me. I shall love—with a selfish love, perhaps—to feel that you are mine and mine alone ; that I possess your undivided affection ; that we are all in all to each other. But I do not understand this yet. Lucie, although you say we

can be nothing to each other, at least place me so far above the rest of the world: tell me your history."

She could not refuse him. In as few words as possible she told him the story of her life; told him everything she knew, from beginning to end. The only thing she concealed from him was that she believed herself to be of noble birth; she told him she believed she was of some good family, but she did not say more.

He listened quietly to the end, and then thought for some moments in silence.

"If you were to find your parents, and they insisted upon your leaving the stage," was his first remark, "you would have to do it."

"Yes," she replied, "but that would be a different matter. I should of course be forced to yield them obedience, even though I did it unwillingly. Let us not suppose such a case, Mr. Rayner: it is not likely to happen. When I left France I left all clue behind me."

"Did you thoroughly search for this clue?"

"For days and weeks; Mariette far more than I, for she was eager about it, and I was indifferent. It is hopelessly lost."

"Did you bring nothing away with you? No box, or book, or relic? I have heard of things being concealed for years in secret drawers, of documents being slipped into the covers of books."

"No," replied Lucie.

But as he spoke his eyes wandered over the room, and rested unconsciously upon a crucifix. His gaze directed Lucie's attention to it.

"I had forgotten," she said, correcting herself; "we brought away with us nothing but that crucifix. Mariette would not part with it: it was placed in this room by Madame Weber."

The old lady had observed the relic, and possibly deeming it a species of desecration to see it in the bedroom of a Protestant, had requested that it might be put in the drawing-room.

"You are but a heretic, my dear," she had said in her plain-speaking but not intentionally unkind manner. "I am a good Roman Catholic, and shall like to see it opposite me as I sit here!" Lucie had acquiesced at once, and smiled to herself at the way in which the old lady so artlessly, because so naturally, gratified her creed. It stood on a small bracket above the console on the wall.

"Your father was a Roman Catholic," remarked Rayner.

"Yes—I suppose he was," Lucie answered, with hesitation. "I do not think they would have tolerated a Protestant professor at the college, but he always went with me to the little Eglise Evangelique. Mariette said he went to take care of me. He must have been a Catholic, though; he attached so much value to the crucifix."

Rayner went over to it.

"Did it ever strike you that the document might be concealed here, Lucie?"

"No," she answered, laughing.

"I have heard of things being concealed even in crucifixes," he observed. "More than that, I once knew of a large sum of gold that was hidden in one for many years. This crucifix seems large enough to contain something or other."

Lucie shook her head and smiled still. She thought his notion as to this crucifix very far-fetched, but was too polite to say it. It had never occurred to her in the remotest degree that the missing proofs could be in any way connected with the crucifix; it was by far too improbable.

Rayner took up the relic and examined it closely. He felt it and tapped it and shook it, and attempted to bend it, until a scream from Lucie caused him to desist. It was all in vain. It appeared to be perfectly solid; to have neither false bottom nor false top, certainly not a false back. After examining it for several minutes he reluctantly gave up his idea as a mistaken one, and was about to put it back in its place, when it slipped through his fingers and fell to the ground. The jerk must have touched heavily upon some hidden spring, for the bottom came out. With an exclamation, half of fear half delight, Rayner hastily stooped, and from the interior of the crucifix pulled out two small, neatly folded papers. As soon as Lucie caught sight of them she turned perfectly pale, and trembled so violently that Rayner hastened to her.

"No," she said, understanding his meaning, "I am not likely to faint. I never fainted in my life; but this sudden discovery has almost taken away my senses."

"I trust it is what you have so long sought for," replied Rayner. "Do not prolong our suspense; take these and read them."

"I cannot," returned Lucie. "I could not read a line. I dread to look at them. It has turned me almost sick. What discovery am I about to make? Do you, Mr. Rayner, first read these letters and then tell me their contents."

He did not wait for a second bidding. Scarcely less excited than Lucie, he crossed over to the window, and opening the first that came uppermost, read to himself the following words:—

"I, Jean Louis Walewski, certify that of my own free will and deed I record the contents of this document; and, as I hope for salvation, I declare that every word herein written is solemnly true and correct.

"For fifteen years I have been living in this same town of France, under the name of Louis Martin. It was convenient to me to drop, some longer years ago, my father's name Walewski, for that of my mother, Martin. The child, Lucie, who has lived with me and borne my name, has passed for my daughter. She is not my daughter: for I never had a daughter, and never was married. For purposes of my

own, which I need not here mention, I stole her in her infancy from her parents, then residing in England, and she has ever since lived with me in France.

"I have endeavoured, as far as circumstances have favoured me, to bring her up gently; to give her an education befitting the rank to which she was born, but which, through my intervention, she has not been destined hitherto to fill. Her name is Lucy Masseron. She is the daughter of the Hon. Thomas Masseron, commonly called Lord Haredale, of Wellsby, in the county of Hertford, England, and of Elizabeth his wife.

"In the sight of Heaven, and in the faith of my own Protestant creed, which is my true creed, and in which creed I shall die, I assert this.

"JOHN LOUIS WALEWSKI."

Here the declaration abruptly concluded.

Scarcely comprehending what he read, Rayner glanced at Lucie and opened the other letter, not observing that it bore a superscription; without pausing to consider whether he was quite justified in what he was doing, he read again as follows:—

"MY LORD,—I address you by your title; for though you have never succeeded in discovering me since that eventful night when, by the same blow, you lost your child and your happiness; yet I have taken care to make myself acquainted with the changes in your career, and know that you are no longer Mr. Masseron, but the Earl of Haredale, and occupy a distinguished position in the world. Permit me to point out to your lordship the inevitable manner in which men's evil deeds are brought home to them. I worked out my own revenge: had I not done so perhaps Heaven might have visited it upon you.

"You do not forget what you did, or the bitter wrong you wrought. But for your winking at your brother's sin, Elize Delrue might not have gone an outcast to her early grave, with her ill courses on her head. Sometimes I wonder if she appears to you in your dreams. You thought to kill two birds with one stone, as they say in your language, to serve your interest in two ways: the one was, not to cross your brother, which you could not afford to do; the other was that your father, the Earl of Haredale, should hear of his evil conduct, discard him, and take you into favour. What mattered it that my promised wife was sacrificed, and my hopes and feelings and prospects were blighted? Retribution, which my hand dealt, did not allow you to escape unpunished. I took away your dearest treasure, your child, Lucy. A short while after that, and your brother was called away; called by God. Did you mourn for either of them, my lord? For the one I know you did; aye, and in tears of blood.

"To pass on. In restoring to you your daughter, do not think I am influenced by generous motives towards you, or by repentance. Far

from it. If I have grieved for your wife's sorrow—who was ever kind and gentle to me—I have rejoiced in yours. I do it—absolutely for Lucy's own sake: in order that she may be spared the pains of solitude and poverty when I am gone. For the warning voice of infirmity whispers to me that I shall not be long here. I have loved your child almost as you could have loved her, and have treated her well. Ask her.

"You have once passed through this town since we were inhabitants of it. I met you face to face, with your little daughter in my hand; but your eyes were bent on the ground, and you and the danger passed by. I marked the change in your appearance: the silver in your hair; the stoop in your shoulders; the grey look of restless anxiety in your face; and I was glad. *I* had done all this; *I* had turned the tranquil current of your life to a troubled sea of storm and sorrow. But what, my lord, had you done for me? You had broken the most sacred tie of my life; you had drained my heart of all the emotion that a man most cherishes; you had hurled upon me utter ruin and desolation; you have assisted in sending me to an early grave. Can I then repent towards you? If ever man was justified in hating his fellow-mortal, am I not that man?"

"Farewell, Lord Haredale. In conclusion, I will say—though the effort almost kills me—that I hope we may both, in the world to which we are hastening, find pardon for our sins, and rest for our souls. In the grave all things are forgotten. "JEAN LOUIS WALEWSKI."

It would be a very difficult task to attempt to describe the thoughts and emotions that arose to Rayner as the letters fell from his hand. He immediately understood the whole matter; he saw clearly laid before him the working out of a deeply-laid scheme of revenge; revenge for some dark deed not too openly hinted at. It never occurred to him to doubt the statements he had just read: Lucie herself was sufficient testimony to their truth. She was, in fact, so like her brother that that alone would have settled the question, when once set afloat. I say that it would be utterly impossible to describe Rayner's emotions. Much as he had loved Lucie hitherto, he felt that—if he did not love her more—for that was scarcely possible—a new and binding and inseparable link had now arisen, in the fact of her being Lord Masseron's sister. He looked across at her, and the sight of her pale, anxious face recalled him to his task. He went to her and seated himself beside her upon the sofa.

"Lucy," he said, "can you bear a great surprise?"

"I can bear anything," she answered. "Have you then bad news to tell me, that you endeavour to prepare me for a shock?"

"It is glorious news; but good news is often as great a shock as bad. Do you know that you are of noble birth?"

"I was told so. It was the only thing I kept from you; for I thought it very improbable. It is true then?"

"Quite true."

"I do not feel any happier," she remarked. "I think it rather gives me pain. My parents, if still living, may be all the less likely to notice me. Think how long we have been separated: I dare say they have forgotten the little daughter they lost. I am ready to hear who they are—who I myself may be."

Rayner scarcely knew how to tell her.

"Of all people in the world, who would you rather be?"

"Your sister," she answered; and then, remembering the mistake she had made, she became covered with confusion.

"I hope not," returned Rayner. "I don't think you meant that. Did you?"

"Perhaps not," she replied, not daring to look at him. "One speaks without thought sometimes."

"Whose sister would you most prefer to be—as we have started the subject."

"Lord Masseron's."

For a moment he did not speak. Then he looked at her very tenderly and placed his hand on hers.

"Lucy, you have your wish. It is so."

She started up. Her breath grew laboured and a choking sensation rose in her throat.

"Mr. Rayner! Surely you are not trifling with me?"

"Lucy! These documents prove beyond doubt that you are the daughter of Lord and Lady Haredale. You were stolen from them in infancy. You and Masseron are veritable brother and sister."

She sank down upon the sofa with her arms outstretched, and buried her head in the pillows. "My brother!" she murmured, with a catching sob. "My own brother! to love freely, as much as I like! And he is going from us!" For some minutes she remained perfectly still and silent, until Rayner gently touched her and recalled her to herself.

"Lucy"—and never again would any of them give her the French name, Lucie—"you will have to give up the stage."

She supposed it would be so; but made no comment.

"Am I still to go away unanswered?"

"You are George's brother," she murmured, shyly; "can you not be mine?"

"It is impossible; neither would you wish it. But I am not George's brother, in reality: you can make me so. Lucy, again I ask you will you be my wife?"

She did not reply in words, but he was more than answered. With an exclamation of deep thankfulness for a blessing greater than he had ever hoped to obtain, he caught her to him. Henceforth her resting-

place would be his breast, his strong arms her shelter ; his love would keep her from all harm ; it should be her greatest happiness as well as safeguard.

But another and a great task remained to him. Lady Haredale must be told that her long-lost daughter had been found again. Whether she was supposed to be dead or not, he could not say ; he had never heard it whispered that they had lost a child in this strange way ; he felt quite sure Lord Masseron knew nothing of it, or he would not have kept it from him. His task now was to make it all known.

He gave Lucy the declaration to read, reserving to himself the letter ; after which he left her for a short while, promising to return for her when he had sufficiently paved the way for her reception.

As chance would have it, Lady Haredale was out, and Rayner hastened on to his friend. Lord Masseron was lying upon a sofa, deep in thought. To have learnt at the eleventh hour of his life (as he had the previous evening) that he had once possessed a sister, and that in all probability that sister was still living, was a fact far too momentous to permit him to dismiss it from his mind. He was pondering over it most intensely as Rayner entered the room ; and as his face, with those large, melancholy, yet most beautiful eyes, was one which easily betrayed itself, Rayner saw in a moment that something was troubling him.

"I perceive I am wanted," he cried, seating himself on the edge of the sofa. "Having left you to yourself for a couple of hours, I come back to find you in a sea of melancholy. Old friend, is anything troubling you ?"

"If I say no, I suppose you won't believe me," returned Lord Masseron.

"Certainly not," replied Rayner, gravely. "Masseron, we have not been friends all these years heart to heart, and soul to soul, for nothing. We know each other thoroughly. I can often read your thoughts before they are spoken : I always know what's coming. Is it not thus with you ?"

"I don't know. You are always the same ; illness, you know, has made me changeable in my moods as the hours of the day. But now I come to think of it, I believe I found out the only secret you kept from me almost before you were aware of it yourself. You know to what I allude."

"I suppose so," replied Rayner, flushing. "And I really think you were the first to discover it. But now, George, you on your part seem to be concealing something from me."

"I have not known it long," returned Masseron. "You are right in supposing I have something to trouble me. It is almost more than I can bear in my helpless condition. I must tell all to you : it will do me good : I shall leave you behind me as my representative. All that I

cannot do, you, for my sake, will undertake. Do you know that last night I learned for the first time in my life that I possessed a sister!"

"Ah!" cried Rayner, starting. "Is it possible? And do you know where she is?"

"There's the miserable fact! I don't know where she is, or who she is—that is, with whom she may be living, and in what condition."

"But you know that she *is* living?"

"I don't know even that. She was stolen from us many years ago, and has never since been heard of. She may be dead; but something within me tells me she is not. Oh! if I could but find her! William, this will have to be your task, after I am gone. You will do it for my sake?"

"Would I not? What is there, short of sin, that I would not do for you?"

"And then," continued Lord Masseron, "when you have found her, if she should be all we could desire, do you know what I would like?"

"What?"

"I lay awake in the night, weaving a little romance for myself. That my sister was found, and you were going to take her for your own. But I am forgetting reality for romance," he broke off, with a smile and a sigh. "There is Lucie in the way."

"Perhaps Lucie would not have me," said Rayner, smiling to himself.

Masseron shook his head: "I know better. There is not a woman in the world would refuse—if she knew you. But you don't seem surprised at this news."

"It has come too late for that. George, how *wonderfully* things have worked round."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to say that it may not after all be so difficult a matter to discover this sister of yours."

"Perhaps you think we have some clue to her. You are mistaken."

"Perhaps I think that somebody else may have a clue."

"You do not refer to yourself?"

"What if I do?"

"Do you mean to tell me that you had any knowledge of this thing?"

"Last night I had none. In twelve hours many strange events may take place."

"I don't understand you, William."

"Well, then, I have found out something about this mystery. I had come in on purpose to tell you all about it. I am glad to find you more prepared than I anticipated."

"You don't mean to say that you have found any clue to my sister?" cried Lord Masseron.

"Don't get excited," returned Rayner, keeping him down on the sofa. "I have done more than that."

"In mercy speak out!" exclaimed Lord Masseron, trying to get free. "Rayner, I am perfectly calm. I know what is coming. You have heard of her, perhaps even found her."

"Even found her," repeated Rayner. "George, I have indeed."

"And who is she?"

He put the question as quietly as he could, but his excitement was terrible, and Rayner was almost alarmed for him.

"One whom you have already wished to claim as a sister," he said, in answer to the question. "Can you not guess?"

"Lucie!"

He did not speak the word above a whisper, and he no longer struggled to get free; the reaction and the suspense, the very fear of the answer, made him perfectly still. Rayner related the circumstances that had just happened, and placed the document he had first opened in his hands. Lord Masseron read it through very quietly, and then closed his eyes. So still was he for some minutes that Rayner grew frightened.

"Are you not well, George?"

He started and opened his eyes.

"Quite well," he answered. "I am trying to realize it, to get it into my brain. You are quite sure we are not all dreaming?"

"I hope I am. As the best proof of it let me go and bring in Lucy. I'll bring the crucifix too."

"No," replied Masseron, getting up. "I will go to her. I will seek my sister and give her the best welcome that ever sister had yet."

"A word before you leave me," said Rayner. "You are to have your wish in more ways than one, old friend."

"Do you mean to say that ——?"

"Yes. The only thing about which I have any doubt is your father's consent. I ought to have spoken to him first; but on my honour I never thought of it. That being all well, we are to be brothers, George, as well as friends."

Lord Masseron did not reply. For one moment the friends were locked together, arms within arms, hands in hands.

And then George Masseron went to find his sister.

CHAPTER IX.

THROWN AWAY.

WANT of space has compelled us to neglect Miss Bosanquet in a very ungallant manner, but we must now bring her once more before the reader's notice. Whether by the strange act we have to record she will rise or fall in his estimation is a question that he must settle with his own conscience.

It has been seen that Caroline Bosanquet fell in love with William Rayner. The truth came to her knowledge very suddenly; how or by what revelation she never quite remembered. But it did come; and she loved him with all the feverish intensity of a deep, strong, and un-disciplined nature. She could scarcely be blamed for this. True, he had never testified by word or sign that he cared for her otherwise than as a passing acquaintance, and thus far she had been unguarded and careless: but until the fact became positively known to her she had not erred. It was then that she compromised herself, her womanly reserve and dignity. Instead of withdrawing from his society upon every possible occasion, and allowing him to seek her if he chose to do so; in place of endeavouring to stifle a passion that, if cherished, would probably land her in unhappiness and misery, she took a directly opposite course. She threw herself in his path on every possible occasion; gave him encouragement in every conceivable manner—encouragement that a less honourable and upright man might have endeavoured to misconstrue. It is true that on the flush of the very first discovery she had somewhat withdrawn herself from his companionship, but it was only because she hoped he would miss her and seek her; when she found that he did not do this, the temptation became too great for her, and she took the initiative into her own hands.

So pointed did she become in her attention to Rayner, that at length, little conceited as he was, he could not but admit that his friend was correct in his supposition, and that Miss Bosanquet must be in love with him. As soon as he became perfectly convinced that she really thought of him more than was good for her peace of mind, he endeavoured to be with her as little as possible. She had a habit of dodging (Lord Masseron called it so) in and out of their rooms at Naples; so sure as she came in Rayner took to dodge out of them. His manners became constrained, his words few: he could not, of course, speak openly to her upon the subject, but he could by his actions show her that she was nothing to him.

It was not of much use. The more he shunned her the more desperate she became. She had confidence in herself and in her

powers of attraction—certainly not without foundation—and she resolved that if he would not woo her of his own accord, he should be made to yield her obedience by the strength of her own will. “I have been a fool,” she confessed to herself. “I have given my heart away where perhaps it was not wanted. But having done this he shall give me his in return. Love begets love: that is, I believe, a recognized law. A few months ago I knew nothing about it; now I know it, because I feel it. I feel that I can, I must, attract William Rayner towards me, as surely as a magnet attracts a needle. I *will* it, and that is sufficient.”

The days and the days went on. She grew more hopelessly involved in her own toils; but the toils she endeavoured to weave around her victim appeared to bring forth no fruit. She did all she could; she sought Rayner upon every possible occasion without actually thrusting herself upon him. She continually had some plea or excuse whereby they were thrown together. She tried all ways and moods to bring him into a proper frame of mind; the lively, the pathetic, the severe; the sad, the passionate, the loving, the cold; infusing a vast deal of fascination into each: one day she would be freezing, the next melting; and Rayner could not help himself.

Caroline felt that she was not gaining ground. Do what she would, the result came to the same. At length she could bear it no longer, and she determined to hazard all upon one last chance. If she failed—but she would not contemplate failure. Sufficient to think of what she would do when the time came.

The opportunity she sought soon occurred. It was the afternoon of the day after the opera: the day when so many things had transpired elsewhere. Lady Haredale had asked Mr. Rayner to go for her to Mrs. Bosanquet upon some very important social business, and he had complied. Caroline, as it chanced, was at home alone. When she was told who was there she changed countenance. She put her hands to her side as if to still the beating of her heart; at this last moment she almost turned sick with suspense. But she had made up her mind, and she was not one to draw back. She felt that her opportunity had come, and she must abide by the result of the interview. Now or never. It was really a truth that she had so far worked upon herself that she could not any longer live in her present state of mind. She joined Rayner in the drawing-room, and he noticed that she was paler than he had ever before seen her.

She was so excited that in the first moment she scarcely knew what she was doing. He held out his hand, but she did not appear to see it. It was only for an instant, and then she was to outward appearance her usual self.

“Be seated,” she said, in a voice with which even she was startled. “How is Lord Masseron?”

“He is rather worse than usual,” replied Rayner, thinking her

manner excessively strange. "You do not seem very well yourself. I hope the opera last night was not too much for you?"

"You may as well cease these kind inquiries, Mr. Rayner. They are very civil but I do not want them. In the first place, I am not ill; I am perfectly well: in the second, I would ask what it is to you whether I am well or ill, living or dead? Do you wish to mock me with questions of which you care not even to listen to the answers? Am I really an object of so much interest to you that my welfare is a source of anxiety?"

"What do you mean?" returned Rayner, who thought she must have taken leave of her senses. "I asked you a simple, straightforward question. Can you not reply to me in the same manner?"

"Very straightforward and very simple—no doubt. So much so that it was scarcely worth the putting. Well, I have answered you, now answer mine: it is equally simple."

"This is very foolish," he returned, almost irritated, and feeling that he was in for something disagreeable. "Can you not be rational?"

"No," she cried, starting up. "I cannot and I will not. I have now had enough of this; I have borne with you in silence, but I will bear no longer. We will come to an understanding. Before you leave this room you shall tell me what I am to you, William Rayner: whether I am anything or whether I am nothing."

"You are certainly mad," he answered. "I do not understand you."

"I am no more mad than you are, though your conduct has been enough to make me so. Do not affect ignorance, or try to evade me. William Rayner, you know that for some time past I have loved you: loved you more than you can conceive of or love in return; more than I love my own life. You must have seen it; I say you know it. I have shown it to you by my actions; I now tell you in words what you are to me. Perhaps I am the first woman who has ever done such a thing; what care I? What matters it if I gain your love in return? Tell me; is my affection wasted upon you? does it fall dead upon you as if it were lying with me at the bottom of yonder bay? Or does it not, by its very strength, awaken an answering chord in your heart? Do you not feel it awakening into life? Is there not a fire kindling within you which nothing but my love will feed and satisfy? Oh, answer me quickly."

She had thrown herself on her knees before him in an abandonment of despair and hope. Her face, upturned in expectation, was suffused with a glow which lighted up her eyes, and caused her to look almost like one beside herself. Rayner was pained and perplexed; he felt excessively uncomfortable, and he got up and went to the window, rather wishing her or himself at the bottom of the bay she spoke of. So surprised was he that he could not at first utter a word. His silence irritated her, and she rose from her knees.

"Speak!" she cried. "Answer me, William Rayner. I will not be avoided."

"Why have you allowed yourself to think more of me than was good for your happiness?" he asked, passing over her question. "I have never given you the slightest encouragement to suppose that you are more to me than a passing acquaintance—a friend. You cannot deny it."

"I do not. It is precisely because you have not done so that I now seek the information for myself. Such love as mine cannot be cast off, or lightly set aside: and there's no one else you care for."

"I would counsel you to re-consider the matter, Miss Bosanquet. Suffer me to advise you, in all kindness, to forget me and this interview; for I can never love you."

"Never?"

"Never."

"Why not?"

He hesitated. "If I tell you, it will be in the hope that it may do you good; that you will see how sad a mistake you have made. Perhaps you will then try and forget me. I cannot love you because I love another."

"It is an untruth!" she cried. "You are only deceiving me. Do you remember, one day when we were walking out in Sorrento—you and I and Lord Masseron—you told me that you had never loved: that you did not even know what love was. Have you forgotten that? I do not forget so easily."

"It was not an untruth," replied Rayner, remaining calm in spite of his anger. "I well remember that day. I remember, too, why I made that remark; I wish you had taken the hint. It was the truth, as much so as what I am now saying. Remember that months have passed since then; many things may take place in a few days—even hours."

"I believe you are still equivocating. Not a day since that time has gone by without my knowing something of your movements. You cannot have met with any one likely to draw out your love. Attempt not to palm off an excuse upon me."

"Do not think it," he replied, more inclined to pity her than to be angry. "I have told you the perfect truth. You force me to repeat it—I can never love you. It is my misfortune, Miss Bosanquet, not my fault. You know that love will not come at our bidding: nay, if we endeavour to call it forth by force it is sure to keep away. I am more sorry than I can tell that you should care for me in the least degree. In all sincerity, in all kindness to yourself, I ask you to forget me. There are many men in the world far more suited to you than I am. Depend upon it, you will one day laugh over this interview, and at what you will then call your infatuation."

"Cease such mockery!" she cried, in a voice hoarse with emotion.

"It is nothing else. The old tale over again. Could you bear the woman you love to talk to you in such strains? Would it do you any good? Would you call it wisdom, or philosophy, or even common-sense? You are false as the rest of the world. You speak what you do not feel, or think; you utter a lie. Would to heaven that I had never seen you, or that I could now follow you to your grave!"

Without being either false or cold, Rayner knew only too well that his advice was hard to carry out. But in justice to himself he could not speak otherwise. To have been more tolerant he must have compromised his sincerity; to have been harsher and more plain-spoken would have wounded his ideas of humanity, and of what was befitting to him as a gentleman. He saw that she was excited; in no mood to hear reason; and he thought that to quench out all hope was the best and kindest thing he could do.

"Let us drop the subject once and for ever," he said. "To dwell upon it will bring pain to both; it can do no good. I can never change. It will be well for us to meet as seldom as possible so long as we remain here; absence may help you to forget me. Indeed, I hope it will. As I have told you, I love another. You must cease to hope; when hope is dead the rest will be comparatively an easy task. Think of me as one unworthy."

"Who is it that you love?" she asked, as the hot blood mounted to her face. "Tell me that."

"Do not press it, I pray. That is a question that neither you nor any one else has any right to ask. I would not have told you this much but in kindness. Forget me, Caroline. I will forget what has now passed; it shall be buried with me, just as if it had never been spoken. We will shake hands; in the future, should we meet, let it be as friends."

"Never. You reject my love; such love as woman never yet gave to man. Take the consequences. I will not see you happy with another; I could not. Should anything happen to me, thank yourself for it. You have destroyed my happiness here—and for aught I know, my happiness hereafter. I leave you. May your future life be as wretched as I would have made it glad."

She passed out of the room. Dashing up the staircase she entered her chamber and closed the door with loud force.

Rayner was left alone in astonishment. He would have given much to have been spared the scene. In the first place, he felt sorry for her. Knowing what it was to love, he could imagine the maddening pain that such a nature as hers, wild and ungoverned, must be suffering. But so far as his conduct to her had been, he felt himself entirely free from blame. He felt grieved that he should have been the cause—however innocent—of her having forgotten modesty and reserve; of compromising her self-respect by a proceeding which few women have ever attempted. It is just possible for cases to arise in which a woman

may be partially justified in taking the initiative into her own hands, but they are rare and peculiar. Caroline Bosanquet's case, it need scarcely be remarked, was not one of the exceptions.

William Rayner left the drawing-room to its repose, determined never to enter it again. He hoped that the young lady was already resolving to forget him, and that in time she would learn to look back upon the past interview with no other regret than that of having so foolishly betrayed her secret. But herein he misjudged her.

Miss Bosanquet had rushed to her room, quite beside herself with anger and disappointed love. What does Shakespeare say?—and he is always right: "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned." Her first act was to throw herself on the bed, and there she tossed about for a time in an agony of despair. After a time, she rose from the bed again in her storm of restlessness, and began fiercely to pace the rooms; her own and others on the same floor. And this gave the opportunity for a most dreadful termination to what might have otherwise been only a trifling if disagreeable episode in life.

In whirling past a shelf in her father's chamber—and really Miss Bosanquet's movements just then could be called nothing else—she caught sight of a bottle containing a dark liquid, labelled *Laudanum: Poison*. The sight arrested her at once; wild ideas came coursing through her brain; a subtle tempter was at hand, whispering into her ear pernicious promptings.

"It is more than I can bear," she groaned, referring to the mortification, and the rejected love; "more than any human being could endure, and live. A few months ago I was boasting to Lady Haredale that I had never known trouble; now I see nothing else before me. If I just swallow *that*, the misery will be at an end. Welcome, death, welcome! You would be far preferable to this state of being—for what will living be but a slow dying of agony? I cannot live to see him loving another: perhaps married to her: if I thought it was that affected, fantastical, moon-faced, low-born actress, Lucie Martin—and I *do* think it—I should be fit to cut her ears off. Oh misery, misery! oh madness! Let me end it! And when he sees me laid in my early grave it may draw tears of pity, perhaps of remorse, from him."

Snatching the bottle in her hand, she went back to her room and bolted herself in with it. Then she paused. It was well to do so; to pause before committing a deed so fearful. But she paused less in hesitation whether she should take the poison or whether to take it all or only a portion. She knew nothing of the properties of laudanum, as to the quantity sufficient to destroy life, except that she believed there were different preparations of it, of different strengths: better in the doubt to be on the safe side, and take it all. Uncorking the bottle with a steady hand, she poured its contents into a tumbler, and drank the whole, which tasted awfully nasty.

And now she felt that all was over ; over for ever. Had she wished to undo her act it was too late ; therefore she would not wish it ; and Caroline Bosanquet was a woman of strong nerve and will. Thoughts of the future came crowding into her brain now ; but she drove them back. Respite was granted her for a short time, but even that would soon be at an end. Some one suddenly tried the door, and then knocked for admittance. "Are you there, Caroline?"

It was Mrs. Bosanquet, who had just come in and was seeking her daughter. Caroline called out that she had a headache and was about to lie down, asking further not to be disturbed. So the mother went away again.

The misguided girl took off her shoes and dress, dragged herself to the bed, and lay down. The chamber was very still. Composing herself to the sleep that she knew must soon overpower her, she lay quiet, repressing all restlessness, whether of mind or body ; and in a short while, lost consciousness. And the day went on outside.

Some hours later, Miss Bosanquet awoke, to find herself in nearly total darkness. Not quite, for the outline of the chamber and its furniture grew, by degrees, dimly visible. How was this? She had not expected to awake at all, at least in this world. Distinctly remembering all that had taken place, she wondered where the failure could be, or whether the poison had only half done its work. Perhaps she had taken too much of it. She certainly felt extremely ill, had dreadfully griping pains in the pit of the stomach ; but as certainly she was not dead. What did it mean?

It meant that Caroline Bosanquet had been more mercifully dealt with than she would have dealt with herself. The bottle labelled "*Poison*" contained nothing worse than a quantity of black draught. Mr. Bosanquet, fancying himself in need of a little wholesome physic, had despatched an old laudanum bottle by his servant that morning to a chemist's, desiring it might be filled with the delectable compound known as black draught ; and he never afterwards fathomed the mystery of its disappearance. It made Caroline very ill, for it was a double dose. What with that, and what with the mortification of events altogether, Miss Caroline Bosanquet kept her bed for three days. It brought her reflection, and a sort of repentance ; she grew to see she was not yet tired of life, to think it might bear charms for her still. And so she got up, wiser and better : thankful to have been saved from an irredeemable sin.

We are now compelled to anticipate the course of events, for we shall not again have the opportunity of alluding here to Caroline Bosanquet. In six months she married an Italian count, rich, gouty, and thirty years older than herself. For a year she led him such a dance of gaiety, that one fine day the gout flew to his heart, and Caroline awoke the next to find herself a widow. Young, wealthy, and

attractive, people said she would be sure soon to marry again. Nothing appeared to be further from her own thoughts. She came to England, bought a small but very beautiful estate in Devonshire, and settled down to a somewhat secluded life, and to the rearing of her little girl. Changed in mind though she is, there is much yet in her that requires reform; but she is better than the Caroline of not long ago, and is gradually toning down into what may eventually become a fine character. She is kind to the poor around her; not very gentle, but considerate; and she is liked by the few friends she has chosen to make. Yet there is ever present with her one episode in her lifetime. A certain interview, the remembrance of which she cannot banish from her mind; and the grave act following upon it, at which she shudders, and sometimes weeps. When she thinks how differently it might have ended, she is very thankful and very grateful, even humble to herself. But amidst all her gratitude and recollections, she is faithful to the one love of her life, and for its sake she knows that she will never marry a second time:

(To be concluded in our next.)



DOLCE FAR NIENTE.

GREEN cliffs, gray boulders, ocean-kissed,

A blue sky and a purple mist

Enveloping the shore :

Far-spreading woods of richest green,

With Nature's fairest flowers between ;

The rising water's roar.

A wide expanse on either hand,

Of summer ocean, sun-clad land,

A shady mossy seat :

On yonder hill a ruined tower,

Beneath, a cool and leafy bower,

Fit for a nymph's retreat.

And, as in some cathedral choir,

When sweetly-singing voices tire,

Others take up the strain ;

The lark's delicious melody,

Poured down, like sunlight, from the sky,

Is echoed back again.

W. B. THOMPSON.

MY CHEMIST LODGER.

BY MORLEY FARROW.

I ENTERED Barking and Chester's (general merchants) office when I was a youngster of fourteen. By degrees I rose in my position, and married at three-and-twenty. In due time I became head-clerk : I am now manager. You will say that the events just narrated were very ordinary—such, indeed, as have been comprehended in the experience of hundreds of other men. Just so. Their even tenor was, however, once broken in a startling and terrible fashion.

More than sixteen years ago, we were living in Holloway. I had been married long enough to have two children ; and we were very happy, my wife and I, though my salary at that time was not large. Most of my friends lived in those parts ; and the best friend I ever had was my wife's sister. She was a widow, five years older than Bessie. Thrifty, careful, with plenty of common-sense, with cheerful manners, and a promptness of decision, she was an invaluable companion for one who had always been delicate, and, with a family coming on, was unable to exert herself as she might otherwise have done. Bessie was the best and the prettiest of wives : my first and only love. But to her cleverer sister, Rhoda Sexton, who lived only a few doors off, and was in the habit of looking in upon us at all times of the day, and being consulted in every emergency, I owed a good deal of the happiness which filled my little home. Rhoda was regarded by all the family, and by me especially, as invaluable.

"Certainly, William, you had better let the first floor. You don't want it ; and as you haven't got that expected rise in your salary this quarter, this house will be too much for you."

Such was her advice when the matter of letting our first floor was mooted, and my wife was unwilling to give an opinion upon the subject herself. We had already had one lodger ; but having expected an increase of salary that quarter, I thought we should be under no necessity to let the rooms again. Business had, however, been bad ; and the partners, reluctantly I know, were compelled to refuse me.

"You know, William, I can do all that is necessary with your increased household. I shall look in every morning ; and Bessie needn't trouble herself. Besides, she mustn't." For Rhoda was thinking of that last baby, which was only two months old.

"Do you know of any one who wants rooms ?" I asked.

"No ; but I'll look in the paper. I dare say we shall find our requirements there." And Rhoda turned promptly to the advertisements

of the *Times*, the office copy of which fell to my turn that day. "I've got what I want," said Rhoda, after an examination of some minutes. "This advertisement will suit us capitally. The neighbourhood is quiet: the neighbourhood is inexpensive." And she indicated the particular advertisement, by which it appeared that a gentleman required two rooms on such terms as we had hitherto charged, in a cheap and quiet locality. Respondents were to apply, first by letter, to "Z. Z. Z.," at a reading-room in Leicester Square.

Rhoda wrote the necessary letter; and shortly an answer came, in which the gentleman arranged to call on a certain day; and, provided the locality, and other matters, were satisfactory, to settle the business definitively.

"He's a foreigner," said Rhoda, "and I object to foreigners. Gives no reference, too!" She looked at me, and then at my wife.

"Let us wait till we see Monsieur Paul Marie-Régnier before we pronounce an opinion either for or against him," I said.

"You're right, William. He will be here the day after to-morrow."

For that day I managed to get a holiday, business being slack, as I was naturally anxious to be one of the parties in the agreement, though I knew that I could rely on Rhoda. Eleven o'clock was the hour fixed for the appointment. Standing by the window at that time, I looked at my watch, and was surprised to see a gentleman stop opposite the house with singular punctuality, and then advance to the door, and ring. Rhoda went and admitted the stranger.

"Here is Monsieur Paul Régnier," I said, turning to Bessie; and the next moment he entered the room, followed by Rhoda. As plainly as if she had spoken, I saw on her large keen face, as it appeared behind Monsieur Paul's, an expression which said: "I don't like him."

He bowed politely to me and my wife, as I requested him to take a seat. "I have not mistaken the house, I find; you are Mr. William Hayley; and you wish to let two rooms. I am a foreigner, as you will judge by my accent. A Frenchman. I like the neighbourhood; and the house. But before I engage with you, or before you commit yourself to any engagement, I think it right to explain my profession." He spoke very quickly, with a marked accent, but with no grammatical deficiency. "I am a chemist, or, to be more correct, I should say that I am in the habit of devoting my time to chemical experiments; and I shall wish to know whether you will have any objection to my doing it in your house. I do not keep a shop; I am no professor; but chemistry is my study. If I engage to take your rooms, it will be with the understanding that I may carry on my usual avocations in this house. I will promise you that you shall be put to no domestic inconvenience."

"I have no objection," I answered; "none in the world." Bessie, whose brother was a small chemist in a country town, and

rather liked the odour which floated about the rooms of the house from the shop below, answered with me.

Rhoda said nothing. "I may bring my few drugs and apparatus then with me," said Régnier, "as you and Madame; for" (and he smiled)—"I perceive the other lady by your side is your wife—advance no opposition to the proposal." After this he turned with a look of inquiry to Rhoda.

"It is not for me to object," she replied. "My brother-in-law and his wife consent: that is enough!"

"You are Madame's sister?"

"Yes."

"And you dislike my conducting my profession in this house? There is no fear. There is no danger. And the housewife's orderly eye will not be offended."

So, in spite of Rhoda's unexpressed objection, we made the necessary arrangements. Monsieur Paul would come on the morrow, and bring his belongings with him. I confess I should have preferred a lodger having a different avocation, and encouraging different tastes; but my wife's sympathies were evidently in favour of the chemist; and she apprehended no danger to the furniture in the rooms of the first floor, from dangerous experiments injudiciously conducted.

"Oh, Rhoda, what a strange, what a romantic-looking man!" she said, when he was gone.

Rhoda shook her head. "I wish I had never advised you to have a lodger, William. I am not often prejudiced, but I am prejudiced against this Monsieur Régnier. When I opened the door to admit him, I started! His is a strange face!"

A strange face! Yes. With dark, deep-set eyes; a full, broad forehead, the veins showing clear through the thin skin; long scattered hair; no moustache or beard; the mouth small, well formed, with half a smile lurking about it. His age was about thirty-five. Though the countenance had a pensive look, he had a rapid way of speaking, which might account for the impression made on a stranger, that there was a singularity about him which was unpleasant.

He came at the hour of the day he had fixed. During the early time of his tenancy he gave us no trouble. Now and then a faint scent would hang about the house, suggestive of chemicals, but this was a rare occurrence. He seldom went out. Our curiosity about him was great; and though when he and I chanced to meet, he was frankly communicative, I seemed to learn little of him. No letters came: and he received no friends.

All Rhoda's apprehension lest his experiments might be of a dangerous nature, were shortly removed; and her first unfavourable impression of him too. His manners were so gentle, and the demands he made upon her service so unexact, that, good woman as she was, she could scarcely continue to regard him in her former fashion. Now and then

she would shake her head, and say, "I don't know what to make of him. There is something puzzling yet."

He had been with us a month, when Bessie was taken ill; and one Saturday night when his rent was due, I went and received it instead of my wife, whom I had left lying on the sofa down stairs. I had never entered the room since his occupancy, till this evening.

"Ah, I am glad to see you," he said, rising from the table, where he was melting some substance over a spirit-lamp. "This is the first time you have honoured me. You find me busy—as you can remark." He knew the errand on which I had come, and handed me the money, which was lying on the table ready. "I hope you find me punctual."

"Very, Monsieur Régnier!"

"Madame, I trust, does not complain of me."

"Indeed, she does not."

"Nor the other madame—Madame Rhoda?"

"Not at all!"

"You will sit? I shall be disengaged in a moment."

I sat and watched him as he bent over the lamp; but did not think it right to ask any questions as to the nature of the substance he was melting. His eyes for many minutes, as a little clock on the mantelpiece informed me, were directed intently on it. Suddenly, he removed the little vessel, which he had been holding to the heat, and raised his face; the light, freed from obstruction, falling strongly on it, and revealing a look of triumph in his deep-set eyes, which startled me.

"There is no triumph like the triumph of intellect, monsieur; or perhaps I should say it is the only durable one! This day I have accomplished what I have been anticipating for years! I find, monsieur, that I am not walking in the dark." He lit an ordinary candle, turned the argand out, and seated himself. In the meantime I handed him the receipt for the week's rent.

"I have generally the honour of seeing Madame or her sister in the evening."

"My wife, I am sorry to say, is unwell—and Rhoda is with her."

"Madame unwell! I am indeed sorry. You and Madame are very happy—you English husband and wife generally are."

"Yes, Monsieur Régnier. I am very fond of her, and very happy with her."

"I have no wife," he said, with a laugh, "nor mother, nor father, nor relatives! This is my wife, my mother, my father—my world!" and he pointed his thin finger to his chemical apparatus. "All my happiness is comprehended in what you see here, and in my studies"—indicating some MSS. which bestrewed the table. "You marvel, I dare say. You cannot comprehend a passion which is intellectual—a comfort that is not material! From morn to night, I work here, having no hope but the consummation of some discovery: satisfied when the

long-searched-for principle is revealed. Oh, monsieur, we students, we chemists, have unknown ecstasies ! ”

“ And do you never hope for other interests—to form other ties ? ”

“ I never think of them ! But I may one day emerge from my obscurity, and taste what of the world I have never yet done. Work is very delightful ; but my work will have an issue—a glorious issue ! ”

He had risen, and was pacing the room : enthusiasm clothing his face, and energy his words.

“ I have made, during the past three or four years, some of the most important discoveries in chemistry which the history of that science can record : but I have waited my time for giving them to the world ; for valuable as they are in themselves, they are additionally so as pointing the way to still more important truths—truths yet not suspected but by me ! I am now prosecuting almost the last stages of an inquiry, which even the most sanguine and daring of experimentalists have considered profitless. You have heard of the crystallization of carbon. Not far off, to me, gleams this glorious possibility ! ”

I gave a start of surprise.

“ Yes, monsieur, I believe I am not proud when I say that I shall accomplish what has been considered only a dream ! Other mysteries, as yet unsuspected, seem to be revealing themselves to me, the patient student ! Even the two great mysteries, those riddles that for ages have puzzled so many brains—Life and Death—I believe capable of an approximate solution ! The marvels of electricity, the discovery of the polarization of light, will not alone give lustre to this age. But if chemistry has secrets whose principle is beneficence, so it has mysteries whose name and power are terror ! ”

I believed he was only an enthusiast ; but could not withhold my admiration. I remained with him some time. As I was leaving (he politely opened the door for me) he said, “ I trust your wife will soon be well. What your solicitude for her is I can judge by my interest in my beloved science ! Good-night : present to Madame, and to Madame Rhoda, my humble respects.”

Bessie was unwell for some days, and I was troubled ; but the doctor assured me that there was no cause for alarm. Still she did not mend. Paul Régnier inquired after her daily, and seemed surprised that no improvement was recorded. “ I do not like to interfere : it would be rude. But if Monsieur would allow me, I think I might be of service to Madame. Your English doctors (pardon my saying so) are in some cases very inexperienced. May I see Madame in your presence and that of Madame Rhoda for two or three minutes ? I have the advantage, of being intimate with two or three pharmacopœias besides the English.”

Bessie consented ; but Rhoda seemed to hesitate. “ Do as you like, William,” she said, at last. “ Bessie is certainly unwell.”

"I am, Rhoda, dear," said my wife, wearily. I kissed her, and spoke some cheerful words; and in a few minutes M. Paul Régnier was summoned from his room by Bessie's sister. He remained with us three minutes, putting a few commonplace questions to my wife, in the kindest, most polite manner, and then returned to his apartments. Half an hour afterwards he knocked at the door again. Rhoda answered it.

"Let Madame take this twice a-day—night and morning—for a week; and I think you will find her better at the end of it."

His words were true. At the end of the week she was better: at the end of the second week she was quite well.

"There, you see, Rhoda," she cried, as she was able to go about the house with all her old liveliness of spirits, and freedom from fatigue,—
"Monsieur Régnier could do what no one else could. Surely you have not one prejudice against him now?"

"No—not one."

For some weeks I saw nothing of Régnier, and heard little. One day, upon my return from my office, I was surprised to hear my wife say, "Oh, poor M. Régnier; I fear things are going bad with him! He has eaten no meat for three days! I was alarmed, for I naturally thought he was ill. But it is not that, I fancy. Oh, William, I fear, poor man, he has no more money!"

Rhoda, coming in the next minute, confirmed what my wife had said. "There's no doubt about it. For more than ten days past he has ordered less and less. Sometimes he would have meat only every second day; but it is as Bessie told you—he has now had none for three!"

I had been curious at first as to the quarter whence he drew his income, but this inquisitiveness soon died out. He was most punctual in his payments, and though very economical in all his habits, was generous to the little girl who was our only servant; and he had on one occasion made two small presents to my wife and Rhoda.

"I won't ask him for his rent, which is due to-night," said Bessie. His bell was just then heard ringing. Our little servant answered it. Monsieur Régnier wished to see me.

I found him, very thin and pale, sitting at the table where he generally worked; but I could see that he had done little for some time. The spirit-lamp was unlit; and his jars and phials occupied their places when he was not putting their contents into requisition.

"Monsieur," he said, smiling faintly, and in a lower voice than usual, "I am in some trouble. I have been prematurely sanguine. Labours which I thought would have been completed by this time fail—because—because—monsieur—my resources are nearly exhausted! Don't misunderstand me, monsieur. I am too proud to borrow money of you—or of any one. You go in the world of business. I am a good linguist.

May you not know of some one in want of a teacher of languages? I have hitherto, from time to time, earned money by teaching. Such means, combined with economy, have afforded me leisure for my dearer work. If I could find employment for a month or two, I should be in a fair position again."

The difficulty had hardly been presented to me, before I saw means of meeting it.

"You understand many languages?"

"German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Modern Greek, as well as Ancient, English as you know, and French. I should not find myself at a loss in Russian——"

"Stop—that's enough," I interrupted, as he was about to enumerate more.

"You can correspond in all these languages?"

"In all!"

"The clerk who does our foreign correspondence is unwell, and has been unable to attend the office for days. I will see the head of the firm the first thing on Monday morning about giving you the duties, during his absence."

"Thanks, monsieur! thanks! You have lightened my heart. After my enforced withdrawal from my studies, I shall go back to them with renewed ardour—and for the future I shall be still more economical! The next processes on which I shall engage myself are very dear!" He laughed—handed me his rent—which I put back, with the words, "Wait till Monday." And having vainly tried to persuade him to join us at our supper that evening, or at the Sunday dinner on the morrow, I left the room, with a rather choking sensation in my throat.

Poor chemist! Poor man!

I had no difficulty in getting Régnier the situation, and he went with me on the Tuesday to the office. He proved himself an admirable correspondent, and the firm was much pleased with him. He remained with us six weeks, receiving a handsome salary, and at the conclusion of the term, when our regular clerk was enabled to return and resume his duties, a present from Mr. Chester, in recognition of the excellent manner in which he had performed his work. His business aptitude was quite as remarkable as his professional enthusiasm. The only change I remarked in his habits was that he came more amongst us, at home; now and then breakfasting at our table, and spending the evening with us.

"I must work now, monsieur," he said, as we were riding home on the 'bus together for the last time. "With the sum that I have saved, and with economy, I shall be able to complete my work, I trust, in a short time. When that is done, monsieur, my position will be assured!"

Upon once more resuming his chemical experiments, he did not entirely return to his secluded habits. He would still come amongst us

occasionally, and seemed pleased to notice that we were interested in him.

About a month after the term of his supplementary clerkship, I came home much troubled. The accounts of the firm's dealings with some foreign house were placed in my hands in the ordinary way to look over. There were two or three things which I could not understand; it seemed to me that there was a difference in the books to the amount of about five hundred pounds. Not wishing to give unnecessary alarm, I kept my apprehensions from any one directly connected with the firm, for that day; but I mentioned the fact to Régnier, in the presence of Rhoda and my wife.

"Indeed," he said, in a voice of interest, "so large a sum—and you have not named it to the firm?"

"No. For I have yet only been over the books hastily, and—besides, I should not like to compromise my own powers of observation."

"Exactly; you are right. Perhaps you are mistaken. In the large dealings done by your firm, you must find it hard to get the accounts to correspond, I should think!"

I turned my face from Régnier to Rhoda, and noticed that she was looking at him intently. But she said nothing.

"I must go over the accounts again to-morrow," I remarked. "I have been with the firm a good many years—and I never knew anything wrong in the books before."

"Ah, Madame Rhoda," he said, "you are thoughtful! Your good brother-in-law's story has set you thinking."

"Yes, Monsieur Régnier," she answered, absently; and a few minutes afterwards, when he left us for the evening, she seized me by the arm, and startled me, by saying in a whisper—

"Forgive me, William, if I'm wrong; but I fear he has done it—our lodger!"

"Stuff and nonsense! Rhoda, your usual good sense has deserted you."

She said no more, and I laughed at her for her absurd accusation. My mind was as free from suspicion that day, and for many days afterwards, as though a man's honour, which an intimacy of years guaranteed, had been called in question. On the sixth day (for I did not resume my examination of the books, until then), having, through a press of orders, had my own regular work considerably increased, I was startled into remembering Rhoda's suspicion. Our transactions with South America had been extensive for months; and in looking over papers with which some of our foreign correspondence had been accidentally, as I supposed, mixed, I saw what looked like a stain on the paper at that part where some figures appeared. It was late in the day, and I retained it for examination the next morning—still, however, main-

taining silence about it. I began to be troubled now, though I did my best to argue the trouble and the suspicion away.

When I reached home that evening, I met Régnier in the passage as he was going out for a walk, who told me that he had heard Madame was unwell again. I entered our little sitting-room, and was grieved to find Bessie lying on the sofa.

"Ill again, my love?"

"Yes, William—so weary. Though I've said nothing to you, I've been unwell for two days. I saw you were preoccupied, and didn't like to trouble you. Oh, William, I am so weak! I do not feel as I felt before, when Monsieur Régnier cured me. Such strange sensations come over me at times!"

My heart turned cold. There was some change, I fancied, in her voice; and, for the first time, an apprehension for the life of her I loved so dearly settled heavily on my mind.

"Will you have a regular doctor, or shall I get advice from Monsieur Régnier?"

"Not from Monsieur Régnier," said Rhoda, entering that moment. "By all means, not. He was successful when there was really little the matter with you! but you had better have your regular doctor now: at any rate, at first." So Régnier was not consulted; but he asked kindly after her.

"You are anxious, I see, monsieur."

"Naturally so, Monsieur Régnier," I answered, in rather a constrained voice.

"By the way, that money—is the difficulty cleared up?" he asked, carelessly, as he was going upstairs to his room.

"No; it is not." My answer was awkward; I felt that his eyes were looking, with keen scrutiny, into mine.

Bessie became gradually worse, and my fears for her increased day by day. I would fain have remained by her side, but hard duty took me from her each morning, and I did not return now till late in the evening, when I was always met with the same dreary reply to my inquiry as to her health: "No better."

Rhoda was the kindest of nurses; and I saw that her apprehensions were assuming the character of mine. She had done the best to make light of her sister's illness at first: but now, when she left her bedside, her face would darken thoughtfully. Bessie's complaint seemed to be some strange atrophy, defying and puzzling the doctor. Day by day, almost hour by hour, she appeared to sink. My heart was rent with grief: I loved her so, and she was going from me.

Terrible as this anxiety was, I had other anxieties as well. My suspicion of Régnier increased more and more, though I found it hard to believe that such a man would commit so dishonest an action as my examination of the firm's book seemed to indicate.

Being reluctant to believe that the crime was his handiwork, I delayed a more exhaustive examination of the accounts from time to time. I had liked the man; and it was painful to know my trust in him must be shattered. But slowly, surely, all the truth revealed itself, in spite of the cunning and the care with which the work was done. There had been an erasure and a change of figures in a foreign letter, which Régnier's chemical knowledge had assisted him in successfully executing. A house with which we did a large business in South America, transmitted to its bankers here, on our account, the sum of eight hundred and fifty pounds—their total debt; and Régnier had made it appear that the sum was but a part, namely, three hundred and fifty. Having during his engagement with us, been frequently entrusted with receiving moneys from the bankers of foreign houses, and transmitting it to our account at our bankers', he was enabled, from the indefinite order signed by the firm, to get possession of the whole sum; placing the smaller sum to us, and retaining the other. As our larger accounts were not made up frequently, he trusted that time must elapse before he was discovered; and the foreign letter, in which the erasure occurred, was, I now saw, purposely placed aside with papers of a different kind. I had the necessary evidence against him complete, which I had most reluctantly gathered before I entered the private room of the firm one afternoon to announce my discovery. Both partners had left half an hour. It was necessary, therefore, for me to delay my story until the next day.

I went home sad at heart. I said nothing to my wife, whom I found suffering from increased prostration, nor to Rhoda. What course was I to pursue with my lodger upstairs? To drop any hint that I knew all would be the signal for his departure; and I was reluctant to take any immediately definite steps in the matter myself. When I was troubling myself with these thoughts, by the bedside of my poor wife, a message came from Monsieur Régnier, saying that he wished to see me. I went quickly to his room.

I did not find the chemist at his usual place by the table. He was bending over a box, carefully packing up an electrical machine, which I had seen him use more than once. His meaning I understood.

"You intend leaving us, Monsieur Régnier?"

"Yes; that is, I may do so," and he looked at me fixedly.

"Though, possibly, not yet."

"You have sent to tell me this?"

"This—yes—and perhaps more. Sit down. Madame—how is she?"

"Very ill—very ill," I answered, in a sad voice.

"You have not honoured me by consulting my poor art this time. Madame Rhoda is still prejudiced; though I was once successful in restoring her sister to health."

"I remember!" He was more at his ease than I, though I knew

what he had done, and began to suspect that he was aware of my knowledge.

"Monsieur, you seem troubled, as indeed you may, by the illness of your good wife; but you seem vexed with other things. Is it possible that that money difficulty of the firm is causing you uneasiness?"

I could not answer; I only looked at him perplexed, and paused.

"Tell me; I am always interested in you!" We were both seated now.

"Monsieur Paul Régnier," I answered, after a long pause, and in a strained voice; "I know all!"

"You—alone?" he said, for the first time speaking anxiously.

"I alone as yet. To-morrow ——"

"Ah—to-morrow. You have an English proverb about that. Let us, monsieur, speak of to-day!"

He rose as he said this.

"I am sorry for you—very sorry. I have liked you; but my duty is to make known my discovery, which I should have done to-day if the heads had not left earlier than usual—hard though the task had been!"

"And you would have given me no warning! That was unkind. Pardon me,—it was Madame Rhoda that caused you to suspect me in the first instance, was it not?"

"It was."

"And now you yourself have justified those suspicions?"

"I have."

Then there was a long stillness between us. Régnier broke it.

"If I were not sure of obtaining your silence I should be more disturbed than I am, when I confess that I committed this crime! Yes, Mr. Hayley, your firm most generously rewarded me; but I needed more money than they could equitably have given me in return for my slight services. I am candid with you. I have taken this money for purposes connected with my science. When these purposes are completed I shall restore it."

The coolness with which he spoke, the strange moral obliquity with which he regarded the whole transaction, were overwhelming.

"Have I not said enough to secure your silence?"

"No, indeed, you have not."

He paced the room for some minutes. Then he stopped suddenly; listened; walked to the door, and opened it. "I thought I heard some one! No! Now, monsieur, I must speak more plainly." With this he locked the door and turned to me: keeping his place by it.

"There is no fear; you must only listen! It is of Madame that I am going to speak.

"Of my wife!"

"Yes; of your wife, who is poisoned!"

I started from my seat, and then sank back again; a great horror

seized me, that paralysed my thoughts, that sealed my lips. He repeated the terrible words.

"Your wife is poisoned, and death is upon her! In three days from this time she will be no more!"

I was able to speak now.

"How—how do you know this?"

"Because I have administered the drug! Monsieur, I have mixed, as you know, with your domestic circle of late, judging it best to do so; and have had opportunities of seeing the food of which Madame partook. Of these I have, when unseen, availed myself! Your doctor may well be puzzled, for the poison is unusual in its manifestation, and leaves, after death, no trace. I discovered it—I, monsieur,—and no one knows of its existence but me. This is one of the terrors of our glorious science!"

"Wretch!"

"Silence! I have not done yet. Remember that I have acted out of no hostility to Madame, or to you. But I saw that Madame Rhoda suspected me in the matter of that money from the first; and I knew that she would communicate her suspicions to you. Your manner a little time since assured me I was right. You may have remarked my inquiries about your wife. How deeply you loved her I knew; and in her I saw the only power I had over you! She will die, monsieur, unless you arrest my hand."

"You deep-plotting villain!" I cried; "you shall not suffer for one crime alone. Get from the door, and let me go!"

"Pardon!" and he smiled his old smile, "I have not yet done. You must denounce me for neither crime, for your great desire must be that your wife should live! Assure me that you will be silent on your discovery, and that you will destroy all evidence of what I have done; and Madame's life shall be spared. To this deadly poison there is an antidote, the formula of which is known only to me! Give me not that assurance, and she will die!"

The strait was a hard one—the bitterness of that moment more than the bitterness of death.

"I repeat what I said some minutes since—in three days she will be no more."

My wife—my wife! So young and so fair, and to be the victim so ruthlessly sacrificed. My anguish, my horror, my sickening despair, defying words, thoughts, comprehension.

"I will go and proclaim what you have done—pitiless man!"

"Do, monsieur. Cause me to be arrested, if you will. I am indifferent to my fate, when I am removed from my beloved science. For you my mouth will always be sealed. The formula of the antidote is not recorded—not even in cipher! And, monsieur, no law can compel me to open my lips! In proclaiming my dishonour—in proclaiming all

that I have done, you will not advance your cause. In spite of your revenge, Madame will die !”

A great sob broke from my heart.

“You are yielding ! You are wise : let me pass free from this house ; destroy what evidence you have against me, and your wife shall be well again. As I, unseen, have administered the poison, I, unseen, or in your presence alone, will administer the antidote. It rests with you, monsieur whether the wife whom you so love is to live or die !”

“How can I trust your skill ?”

“You remember that I have before been of service to Madame. You need not doubt me.”

I did not doubt him. Enthusiast as he was, I believed that his boast of power was not a vain one. I knew what my duty was : but how strong, how fatally strong, was the temptation to evade it. He saw that I was yielding.

“Monsieur need have no fear for Madame's future health. The counteracting agency that I shall supply is immediate in its effects. In fourteen or twenty-one days all the symptoms that now cause you and her friends pain will have disappeared. Nature will accomplish the rest. I purpose to remain here only so long as it may be necessary to see that a cure is effected !”

“You are sure you can do this ?” I asked, hoarsely. “Do not jest with me.”

“Monsieur knows that I am not jesting with him. You consent, then ?”

“I consent.”

“You give me your word that all evidence you have discovered of my crime shall be destroyed at once, and that you will divert suspicion, should it arise, in others, and at any future time, from me ; and that you will, furthermore, make no reference to these matters to those of your family who know me.”

“You have my word.”

He moved from the door, where he had been standing. I approached it ; and when he had arranged for the means and the time of the administration of the antidote, I staggered, rather than walked, from the room. I could not join my wife for some minutes. When I did I found that Rhoda was not with her.

“She has been away,” Bessie said, languidly, “nearly as long as you. Oh ! what have you and Monsieur Régnier had to talk about all this time ?”

She had only just put the question when Rhoda came in, looking, I thought, very pale. She advanced to the bed where her sister lay, and kissed her, shuddering.

“Why, Rhoda !” I said, “you are troubled.”

“No—no, I am not,” she answered, taking my hands, and looking

into my face with her kind, brown eyes ; "only," whispering, "I am anxious for Bessie—and for you."

I turned passionately to my wife. I dared not say what I knew: Had I dishonoured myself for a vain hope ?

I administered the antidote to her, mixing it carefully with her broth ; and found that all Régnier had said of its effects was verified. She regained her spirits, her strength. In a week she left her bed ; and in one-and-twenty days I could scarcely detect any traces of illness, save a slight delicacy of colour, and an incapability of protracted exertion.

"I have kept my word, monsieur," said Régnier, "and to-morrow I shall leave ; where I go I cannot say. But it is possible that you may hear from me again. The events of the last three weeks have rather distracted me from my usual avocations. I shall be able to resume them ; and take up again now all my old studies. For what you have done for me, monsieur, I thank you !"

I don't know that I suffered more keenly than I did the next morning, when he had arranged to take his departure, the cause of which I had done my best to explain to my wife and Rhoda, in as feasible a manner as possible.

Rhoda said but few words on the matter ; but this morning I thought she seemed anxious and curious.

I had not been to the office for three or four days ; for Mr. Chester having noticed that I was looking unwell, gave me permission to take as long a holiday as I liked. About eleven o'clock I went to my lodger's rooms, and found him busily completing his packing up. "I began this work more than three weeks ago," he said, calmly, "as I did not know what steps you might be prepared to take ! What's that ?"

A cab had rapidly driven up to our door, and the bell was being loudly rung. I hurried to the window and glanced down ; Mr. Chester was just descending from the vehicle ; and two men, whom I knew to be detectives, were with him.

"What's that ?" asked Régnier again, quickly ; for a look in my face frightened him.

I hesitated and did not answer.

"You have played me false," he said, in a deep whisper.

"He has not ! You owe your detection to me. I overheard your interview with him weeks ago !"

The speaker was Rhoda, who had just entered by the door, followed by my wife, Mr. Chester, and the two detectives.

"I see," said Régnier, with marvellous quietness, "I owe this to you, Madame Rhoda. Of all in this house you are the only one I ever feared. Spy ! Had I suspected you were *quite* so dangerous, I would have silenced your tongue before you could have spoken a word. I know what I am to expect from these men."

Mr. Chester had come to my side, and whispered kindly in my ear ;

"You did what every husband would have done. I forgive you, William. Rhoda made us acquainted with it all the next morning. The evidence has been complete for days. We only waited until the rascal had fulfilled his promise, and restored your wife to health!"

"I did not know what you had done for me till this minute, my dear husband." And Bessie took my two hands in hers, and kissed me.

The detectives had not yet approached Régnier; for there was something terrible in his cold indifference that seemed to keep them at bay. As they at last made a step forward, he turned paler, and waved them off. "Stay—I am unwell. In a moment—if you are patient—I won't resist. But I feel faint. Give me some water. It is near your hands, Mr. Hayley."

I found some in a glass and gave it him, noticing that he kept his hand in the box, which he had been filling with drugs, as I entered. As he took the glass of water, he quickly threw some powder in it, and while two or three of those in the room, guessing his purpose, rushed forward to stop him, drank it off!

"I am denied the glory of revealing what I know! It shall at least go with me to the grave!"

He fell dead the next moment.

This is the only romantic incident which happened in my life. Of my strange lodger's previous history I learned some particulars three or four years afterwards. He had been educated at a charitable institution at Paris; and from his earliest years had been an enthusiast in chemistry. Indeed, he had once prosecuted his studies so assiduously, that he suffered in consequence from a temporary cerebral disease, and was believed to be affected in some slight measure ever since, as the wild dreams of the discoveries he was about to make would seem to prove. We were not the only people he had victimized. An institution in Germany where he held some office lost a good deal by him; but two or three enthusiastic professors, when they heard of the objects to which he devoted the money thus obtained, did not press the matter.

That he had made some extraordinary discoveries there was no question, as his papers, upon examination after his death, proved to all who were acquainted with such matters; but the completion of his work being in cipher, to which no key could be found, his more important secrets were never known. The fact of his having really poisoned my wife was called in question, when I mentioned the story to a distinguished physician who knew something of Régnier. He believed he had only taken advantage of her illness to frighten me, from which she either afterwards recovered in a natural way, or through the operation of proper remedies administered by him. I cannot say. I only know what I believe—that Régnier—terrible as it was—spoke the truth!

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[December 1, 1852.]



The Argosy.]

"He has escaped me," cried Mr. Harlev."